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On the Table: Episodes in the Political Life  
of an Early Modern Object

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in History of Art

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Elizabeth A. Honig, Chair  
Professor Margaretta M. Lovell  
Professor Niklaus Largier

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## Abstract

### On the Table: Episodes in the Political Life of an Early Modern Object

by

Aleksandr Balashov Rossman

Doctor of Philosophy in History of Art

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This is a dissertation about tables. More specifically, it is an exploration of different ways in which tables came to play new and vital roles in Europe during the seventeenth century in relation to the articulation of political and territorial relationships. As objects, tables are often overlooked in two senses. On one hand, they are so commonplace that we scarcely take note of them. They have become part of an everyday landscape in which their surfaces seem to effortlessly cater to our (unconscious) needs. On the other hand, tables are literally overlooked in the sense that we generally look over and across them. In this regard, they provide a kind of contained almost cartographic landscape. The table can intensify the ways in which we perceive either the objects arranged upon it, or the faces seated around it since it isolates them and places them into sets of relationships that can be examined in a concentrated fashion. Tables, thus, offer a special kind of terrain — one that often escapes notice today precisely because it is so omnipresent.

“On the Table” brings tables and their significance back into focus by examining the ways in which social and political changes in the early modern period manifested themselves in the form and materiality of three specific tables. Detailed case studies offer close readings of a table from Elizabethan England (1567), the table that features in Dutch painter Gerard Ter Borch’s seminal painting of the Treaty of Münster during the Westphalian peace conference of 1648, and a *pietra dura* table presented to Louis XIV in 1684 in order to examine different aspects of the formative roles that early modern tables played as spatial and political agents. In the English context, the dissertation examines one woman’s table and enquires into how her table played a role in staking a Tudor woman’s claims over space, place, and dynasty. Moving from the table as an instance of self-portraiture, the analysis shifts to reading the table as an agent for building a group portrait in the context of modern multinational peace conferences. The final chapter, at Versailles, interrogates what it meant to create a portrait of the state at the Sun King’s court. Along the way, shorter interludes explore table-culture further by examining, for instance, how tables brokered meetings across cultures (e.g. Habsburg-Ottoman negotiations) and how the rectangular table relinquished its hegemony to new, flexible round forms in the seventeenth century. This dissertation argues that tables did not simply reflect changing political and social imperatives, but participated actively in producing physical, social, and political realities. It further stakes a claim for attending to the vital roles that seemingly simple objects like tables have played historically – and continue to play – in shaping our lives.

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## Acknowledgments

At some point, while still deeply uncertain what this dissertation was actually about, my therapist informed me it wasn't about whatever particular topic I couldn't decide upon. It was about me. And she was right. But it was also about all of the wonderful people I have met along the way and in that regard, it is entirely fitting that it ultimately turned out to be about tables. I've been so fortunate to share tables of all kinds with people in so many places on this path; it's hard to know even where to begin with acknowledging all the help, support, and stimulation I've received from so many and without which I most certainly would have withered up. Thanks first to my incredibly patient advisors Elizabeth Honig, Margaretta Lovell, and Beate Fricke for inspiring me, accepting my foibles (and even, sometimes, seeing them as a virtue), and guiding me through this. Thanks too to all of the professors and staff that gave me so much at UC Berkeley along the way, including Niklaus Largier, Karen Feldman, Deniz Göktürk, Timothy Hampton, Déborah Blocker, Jeroen deWulf, Todd Olson, Anton Kaes. Huge gratitude to everyone in the Art History office as well as in the German department office (who astonishingly gave me a workspace and keys to the German library!). Without them, I would not have been able to find my way.

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## At the Table: an Introduction

This is a dissertation about tables. More specifically, it is an exploration of different ways in which tables came to play new and different roles in Europe during the seventeenth century in relation to the articulation of political and territorial relationships. Tables and politics? I'd like to begin with an anecdote:

*Once I was at the home of a rising art star friend in the North Berkeley hills. The rising art star worked on highly conceptual video projects. Sprawled out on the sofa in her living room, separated from me by a low, round coffee table, was a hip, cutting-edge curator (formerly of the UC Berkeley contemporary art museum program called "The Matrix") who asked what I was working on, her face illuminated by a table-lamp perched on a small circular side table flanking the couch to the left. "Well, I suppose I tend to be interested in the history of the interior and furniture," I replied. "They let you work on THAT at UC Berkeley art history?" She shook her head, perplexed. "So you don't have to work on anything relevant?"*

I was a bit taken aback. Why the bewilderment? Such comments, however, should have come as no surprise since the history of "decorative arts" and "interior decoration" or "luxury accoutrements" is by any measure considered at best a minor subfield of art history. It remains a kind of frivolous coda in a grand narrative still privileging "major" artistic achievements that—ironically in light of the discipline's claims to "undo" myths of artistic genius—continues to assign the greatest importance to history painting, monumental sculpture, grand architecture, or elaborately conceptual video installation (today's version of the history painting). How could anyone work on something so insignificant, so *superfluous*? Maybe print culture, but tables? Yet the comments seemed odd seeing as we were seated in a comfortable living room ensemble of furnishings.<sup>1</sup> Were the table elements truly superfluous?

The curator who was puzzled by the importance of furniture seemed oddly oblivious to the fact that it was an upholstered sofa that supported her weight in the very moment that she declared furniture "irrelevant." She further overlooked that it was a low coffee table that drew us together, while a lamp on the small round side table (a latter day *guéridon*, to use the original French 17<sup>th</sup>-century term) illuminated our *tête-à-tête*.<sup>2</sup> That any of these objects performed vital physical and social tasks seemed of little interest to her because it was concepts that mattered to this curator and a conviction that the politics of the body did not depend on external objects - *in*

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<sup>1</sup> In art historical terms, they also belie the modern prejudice that paintings are more valuable than furniture, when in fact in period terms of cost, the opposite was often true. Today, a Flemish 'art cabinet' (*Kunstkast*), for instance, sells at an art fair like TEFAF for far less money than a 17<sup>th</sup>-century Flemish or Dutch painting by a sought-after artist; at the time, however, such cabinets drew exorbitant prices. On these specific objects and their prices see e.g. Ria Fabri, *De 17de-eeuwse Antwerpse kunstkast: Typologische en historische aspecten* (AWLSK: Brussels, 1991), 198-207.

<sup>2</sup> A *guéridon* is small round table usually topped by a candelabra. Antique examples were found in Herculaneum and Pompeii, but the object reappeared *en force* in 17<sup>th</sup>-century France under Louis XIV. The *guéridon* can be identified by its triangularly disposed feet, topped with a tray-like circular table. Usually, the *guéridon* supported a candelabra, it was a table that bore light. We will return to the *guéridon* in chapter three when we visit Versailles. See Geneviève Souchal, *Le mobilier français au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1962), 76; Pierre Verlet, *French Royal Furniture* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1963), 35-37; Pierre Verlet, *French Furniture and interior decoration of the 18<sup>th</sup> century*, trans. George Savage (London: Barrie & Rockliffe, 1967), 200-201.

*spite* of the fact that queer contemporary art criticism in particular takes pride in emphasizing the *materiality* of *craft* as a political engagement.<sup>3</sup> But *Art* (with a capital ‘A’ for importance) is not furniture, she suggested. Did it matter that small tables had a specific history? That sofas are an object that bespeak processes of global integration (to use current buzzwords in art history; one could also use “cultural appropriation”) that began in the early modern era, bringing near-eastern and western polities closer together both aesthetically and politically?<sup>4</sup> Does it matter that such furnishings were the means through which our encounter, like countless, others were - to use Erwin Goffman’s terms - the means of establishing “where the action was”?<sup>5</sup> Or were they indeed irrelevant? From the curator’s point of view, these objects simply administered *to* our needs. “*On the Table: Episodes in the Political Life of an Early Modern Object*” complicates this line of thinking. It in fact asserts the opposite: furnishings *administer* our needs, rather than cater to them. They define spheres of action, locating social relationships in space and choreographing them in ways that can have a critical and indeed political import; objects like tables define bounded territories that can both neutralize or facilitate contests of authority; they offer a means for staking out claims about and over space through the ways in which their form positions social relationships.

Tables tend to escape our purview today because they are so ubiquitous. Perhaps they seem unimportant because we have come to take them for granted. Yet in excavating their history, we discover that this seemingly simple object played an absolutely central role in mediating human interaction and that tables possessed (and still possess) vital public, as well as private, functions. These functions rushed to the forefront of the table’s life in early modern Europe, in step with particular developments in political notions of territory and property, and claims over space and place. The *moment* of the table can arguably be located in the seventeenth century, when it strode to the forefront of European diplomatic and court culture. For this reason, I have focused on this period in the west during which tables became instruments that not only reflected, but also organized socio-political change.

These changes – toward the modern territorial state and state “system” as well as proto-capitalist visualizations of property ownership – found not only expression but *articulation* in objects like tables, whose bounded edges and stable “tops” framed expanses of space as coherent, balanced, territorial units. To put it another way, the places at which and ways in which a table *stood* tell us something about developing notions of the state *as* status, or, that is, a “condition” of possession increasingly understood in terms of spatial, political, or economic autonomy. It was no wonder that tables become a fixture of the princely portrait in this period, infiltrating the space of representation, not only as a prop upon which objects of prestige could lie, but as a means of expressing the very particular notion that the upright *status* of a prince is confirmed by his possession of a balanced, stable overview of a delimited amount of (territorial) space. Macchiavelli’s “*stato*” as both a state and state-of-being, to recall, depended on the reconnaissance of a geographic domain that a prince was to fortify through arms and political savvy.<sup>6</sup> This physical and conceptual staging of autonomy foundational for the “*stato*”, was later

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<sup>3</sup> E.g. Julia Brian-Wilson, *Fray: Art and Textile Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> We will return to the sofa later in Transitional Space II.

<sup>5</sup> See Erving Goffman, *Where the Action Is: Three Essays* (London: Allen Lane, 1969).

<sup>6</sup> As Stuart Elden points out, “*stato*” is the word with which Macchiavelli begins his infamous 16<sup>th</sup>-century treatise *The Prince*. Often in that text, *lo stato* appears not only as a designation of territorial dominion (republic or principality) but also a measure of power. When he inquires whether a ruler has “*tanto stato*” he means, do they have enough power, i.e. Philip of Macedonia has “*non molto stato*” compared to ancient Rome and Greece. See Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 248. According to Quentin



complicated when tables began to appear as fixtures of diplomatic meetings—in such instances, their surfaces not only staged autonomy, but also, perhaps counter-intuitively, international community.

My suggestions here mean that this project aims in part to expand how we think about “status” furniture in general and tables specifically. It is all too easy to construe and contextualize the importance of decorative objects purely in terms of their expense and material luxury. In 1663, two years after assuming the sole reins of power, Louis XIV wrote to his newly appointed supervisor of the royal furniture workshops at the Gobelins that “there is nothing that indicates more clearly the magnificence of great princes than their superb palaces and their precious furniture.”<sup>7</sup> The prince’s grand entrance onto the political stage, out from the under the umbrella of his mother and Cardinal Mazarin’s regency, necessitated a complementary furnishing of his own palace, the creation of his own *place*. Louis’ comments underscore a common perception of handsome and expensive early modern furniture: namely, that expensive and sophisticated furnishings made with lavishly worked materials articulated the status of their owner simply because they were expensive and lavishly worked. Metropolitan Museum of Art curator Wolfram Koeppe observes, for instance, in relation to lavish Baroque console tables, “Large console tables were an obligatory feature of the parade rooms of aristocratic palaces of the late seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth century. Often ordered in units of two or four, with matching mirrors and stools, such pieces helped to achieve the perfect symmetry of the intended stage-like interior.”<sup>8</sup> These tables, he states, are simply part of princely “staging”. They are an integral element of a larger *staffage* of grandeur, subordinate to the humans around them, whose presence they literally reflect in their gleaming surfaces. In this view, which is by no means incorrect, furniture (like clothing) is to be understood in terms of “status.” And status is marked in terms of what sociologist Pierre Bourdieu would call “distinction”: Expensive things not only signify but embody wealth and privilege, just as up-to-date, or trendy forms serve as proof of taste and knowledge because they separate the haves from the have-nots (or those in the know from those ignorant of current fashions).<sup>9</sup>

This of course is true. In order to *be* the Sun King, for example, Louis needed to impress his power on his court and the world through the mobilization of spectacle, which included objects like furniture. As Leora Auslander has emphasized, Louis’ furniture *was* the the King’s furniture precisely because nobody else in the kingdom could afford the same glistening opulence. Hence, when Louis needed money to fund his failing wars in 1689, he melted down

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Skinner, “by the end of the fourteenth century, the term *status* had also come to be regularly used to refer to the state or condition of a realm or commonwealth.” He continues, “I shall instead suggest that, in order to investigate the process by which the term *status* and its vernacular equivalents first came to acquire their modern range of reference, we need to keep our main attention fixed on the early histories and advice-books for magistrates I have already singled out, as well as on the later mirror-for-princes literature to which they eventually gave rise. It was within these traditions of practical political reasoning, I shall argue, that the terms *status* and *stato* were first consistently used in new and significantly extended ways.” Quentin Skinner, “The State” in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change (Ideas in Context)*, ed. Terence Ball, James Farr and Russell L. Hanson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 96.

<sup>7</sup>Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts. Based on original work by James Parker. “Furnishings during the Reign of Louis XIV (1654-1715).” In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), [https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/lofu/hd\\_lofu.htm](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/lofu/hd_lofu.htm), last accessed December 4, 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Sic. Wolfram Koeppe, 1999

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/209244?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=console+table&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=5>, last accessed December 4, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (London: Routledge, 2010).

his famous 167 pieces of solid silver furniture (including a one-ton balustrade that *separated* his bed from the courtiers in his open chamber) for money rather than selling it to someone else.<sup>10</sup> Only the King could own the King's furniture. Earlier, in sixteenth-century Rome, the wealthy and powerful patron of the arts Cardinal Alessandro Farnese commissioned a grandiose table in *pietre dura* (marble inlay, in this case 'quarried' from the Baths of Caracalla) for the state rooms of the palace he was building in Rome.<sup>11</sup> An inventory dating from 1653 indicates how important this table was to him and his descendants: when the owner was away, the object was housed *in situ* but inside "a wooden box [with] a chain that loops to close it and in the middle a small mattress full of wool, covered with a quilted checkered cloth" that was draped in turn with "a cover for this table, made of tooled and gilded leather with four fringes, decorated borders, and fleur-de-lys."<sup>12</sup> It appears as though the massive table, which is still far too heavy for even a team of twelve to move, needed to remain as protected and coddled as the fleshy body of the absent owner.

This was not only because of the table's great expense and the sophisticated ways in which the deployment of Antique motifs and media spoke to Cardinal Farnese's learning and lineage, but also because his table of state directly implicated the state of the body that owned it, with whom it shared certain qualities. Something similar was true in England, where thanks to the *Booke of the Household of Queene Elizabeth* (1600), we also have a sense of the role of table rituals in the late Tudor court:

At last came an unmarried lady, dressed in white silk, along with a married one bearing a tasting knife; the former prostrated herself three times and in the most graceful manner approached the table where she carefully rubbed the plates with bread and salt. When they had waited there a little time, the yeomen of the guard entered...bringing in at each turn a course of twenty-four dishes, served in silver plate, most of it gilt. These dishes were received by a gentleman...who placed them upon the table, while the lady taster gave to each of the guard a mouthful to eat, for fear of any poison.<sup>13</sup>

This took place to the thunder of drums and trumpets for at least half an hour. Elizabeth, however, was not seated at this table; it was simply demarcated as *hers* through a "canopy of estate" and its weighty, permanent form. The Queen herself dined instead in a withdrawing room removed from this ceremony in the more intimate company of select ladies of her household. The table, however, stood in for the monarch's stable authority as well as her hospitality; after the ritual of serving the absent table the Queen's servants partook in the meal but only at foldable, portable tables that differed markedly from the hefty permanence of Elizabeth's regal (if empty) "borde" as tables were sometimes called in sixteenth-century England.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Leora Auslander, *Taste and Power: Furnishing Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 47.

<sup>11</sup> Olga Raggio. "The Farnese Table: A Rediscovered Work by Vignola." *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 18 (March 1960), 213–31.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>13</sup> Cited in Peter Brears, *Tudor Cookery: recipes & history* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2003), 70-71.

<sup>14</sup> In fact, Elizabeth's was a "*dormant*" as we will discuss in chapter two, since "sleeping" tables were, in England, the only tables that did not move and were not regularly dismantled. Under Elizabeth, stone altars in churches were also replaced with mobile wooden tables, marking the shift away from Catholicism by undoing the idol-like qualities of the stone altar and replacing it with a material and form that could no longer be confused in any way with the Christ's *Leib*. In 1564 Elizabeth required that each "Parishe provide a decent table standing on a frame for the

These examples are more than fun facts; they suggest ways in which not only table rituals but tables as objects could be emblematic of the “states” (*état, status*) of their owners. Let’s think briefly about this more. In sixteenth-century England, portraits tended to be spared from iconoclastic attack in the wake of England’s break with Rome. A portrait (often described as a “table”) could, as Elizabeth claimed when she decreed that monuments and tombs ought to be spared from iconoclastic attack, represent a kind of memorial for posterity and as such not be misconstrued as an actual *incarnation* of an individual.<sup>15</sup> The monarch’s studied absence at her dining table, however, suggests that a literal “table” could also be understood as standing in quite materially and metonymically for the Queen’s body, just as Farnese’s table embodied claims for longevity and Louis’ silver furniture manifested the sovereign’s claims to divine *éclat*. The designation of expensive tables, therefore, as “status objects” or “staging” seems to not quite grasp the complexity of the ways in which these objects mediated between individuals and collectives, between – in some cases – monarchs and their “states”, understood as a spatial and social structure held together by more-or-less flexible joints like the mortise and tenon joinery that supported the weight of Elizabeth’s “*dormant*”.

Historians of decorative arts have found different and increasingly nuanced ways to address these complexities. Traditionally, the preserve of the “dec arts” historian was connoisseurship and cataloguing, arranging objects into a continuum as a history of style.<sup>16</sup> Alternatively, one could also do a biography of a specific craftsman, often a stand-out example of an individual “genius”, like the great eighteenth-century *ébeniste* Jean-Henri Riesener, or a specific workshop, or a period.<sup>17</sup> Social history approaches, on the other hand, tend to consider how and why certain forms of furniture were used and developed in specific social contexts. Fantastic examples of this kind of research into furniture abound, though they tend to focus on the sorts of objects that mirror our own desire to ascribe depth and complexity to ourselves and our “possessions”.

Such an approach often luxuriates in objects that are as complicated as we would like to imagine ourselves (or as thinking, “feeling”, and “layered”).<sup>18</sup> Many pieces of eighteenth-century furniture have offered themselves as rich and even thrilling examples for such interpretations: a fine desk (*secrétaire*) with its secret compartments and elaborately gilded locks and keyholes, or a *commode* with a body of drawers that hint at an interior that differs from its exposed exterior.<sup>19</sup>

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Communion table...” See John Fiske, *When Oak Was New: English Furniture and Daily Life 1530:1700* (Ipswich, MA: Belmont Press, 2013), 222–25.

<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Honig, “In Memory: Lady Dacre and Pairing by Hans Eworth” in *Renaissance Bodies: the Human Figure in English Culture ca. 1540-1660*, edited by Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn (London: Reaktion: 1990), 76.

<sup>16</sup> I personally have reaped the immense benefits of studies like Monique Riccardi-Cubbit *The Art of the Cabinet: including a chronological guide to styles* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992) or Pierre Verlet, 1967 to name of a couple of my favorite traditional studies of furniture forms.

<sup>17</sup> For instance, Pierre Verlet, *Möbel von J.H. Riesener* (Darmstadt: F. Schneekluth, 195?), Pierre Verlet, *The Savonnerie* (Fribourg: Office du Livre, 1982), Pierre Verlet, *Les Meubles Français du 18e Siècle* (Paris: Pr. université de France, 1956).

<sup>18</sup> See the essays, for example, in *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With*, edited by Sherry Turkle (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> See for instance Dena Goodman, “The Secrétaire and the Integration of the Eighteenth-Century Self” or Carolyn Sargentson, “Looking at Furniture Inside-Out: Strategies of Secrecy and Security in Eighteenth-Century French Furniture” both in *Furnishing the Eighteenth Century: What Furniture Can Tell Us about the European and American Past*, ed. Dena Goodman and Kathryn Norberg (London: Taylor & Francis, 2007), 183–236. Mimi Hellman’s “Furniture, Sociability, and the Work of Leisure in Eighteenth-Century France” in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, no. 4, Sites and Margins of the Public Sphere (Summer, 1999), 415–45 is another classic, and important, example in this genre.

By the same token, recent analyses of the material trappings of early modern *Wunderkammer* (like seventeenth-century Flemish, Dutch, and German *Kunstkabinett*) fit in well with art history's embrace of the "material turn" and an interest in the social history of science.<sup>20</sup> Objects like *kunstkasten* (art cabinets) that can be opened, closed, shared, and manipulated appeal to a desire to understand science and global trade as a process of material negotiation and collective discovery, unfolding, or social production. Alternatively, still more recent approaches to decorative art have focused on trading histories that locate meaning in the (often violent) movement of materials and resources through networks of global trade.<sup>21</sup>

All of these approaches have their distinct merits as well as their biases or weaknesses (the focus on the history of global trade and materials, for example, sometimes overshadows specificities of form and formal analysis). This dissertation does not take aim at any of them; indeed, acknowledging them in this introduction is a means of positioning this project in their company. What this study brings to the table is *the table*, which remains curiously absent from recent work in decorative arts histories, perhaps because the table as a form is both so simple and so recalcitrant. What *can* one say about something that is so glaringly flat and relentlessly bereft of discrete allure? And if analyses of materials like mahogany, from which tables in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were made, have already been done then what remains of interest to be said? "On the table" suggests that, indeed, much remains to be observed and uncovered about the deceptively simple table.

In what follows in this introduction, I am going to identify some aspects of tables that I think are not only interesting to consider, but also curiously central (if simultaneously auxiliary) to thinking about two interrelated, and eerily relevant issues: first, how objects gather people around them and how political grounds are laid. By ground I mean several things: a literal ground (such as a table top), an epistemological ground, and a metaphorical ground.<sup>22</sup> Tables, I argue, came to perform these tasks with increasing prominence during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, at which point they began to infiltrate spaces and images in new ways. It is perhaps no wonder that they, therefore, also began to occupy a symbolic importance not only in political parlance and philosophical work of the early modern period — in the work of figures like Leibniz for instance — but also came to hold central positions in the work of political theorists across the modern period in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from Marx and Husserl, to Arendt and Foucault (although I am going to allow myself some linguistic slippage when it comes to Foucault's "table" of signs). Tables became imbricated in new ways of seeing, controlling, organizing, and debating the world order during the shift to what Foucault's epochal definition would call the "classical episteme".<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See for example Virginie Spenlé "The Cabinet and its Importance to *Kunstkammer* and *Wunderkammer* in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century" in *Furniture for European Kunstkammer: Collector's Cabinets and Caskets* (Munich: Georg Lauer, 2008), 24–31 and Nadia Baadj, "Collaborative Craftsmanship and Chimeric Creation in Seventeenth-Century Antwerp Art Cabinets" in *Sites of Mediation: Connected Histories of Places, Processes, and Objects in Europe and Beyond*, ed. Susanna Burghartz, Lucas Burkart, and Christine Göttler (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 1450–1650.

<sup>21</sup> For instance, Jennifer Anderson's harrowing *Mahogany: the costs of luxury in early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

<sup>22</sup> For an introduction theories of the ground in art, especially, see Gottfried Boehm "Über das ikonische Kontinuum" in *Der Grund. Das Feld des Sichtbaren*, ed. Boehm and Matteo Burioni (Fink: Munich, 2012), 28–92.

<sup>23</sup> For purposes of convenience, we will adopt this heuristic term, acknowledging simply in this footnote that many scholars have questioned Foucault's sweeping temporal and epistemological categories. Nonetheless, for my arguments, the theses he lays out in *The Order of Things* have been both useful and remarkably generative for my own analyses of material objects. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: an archeology of the human sciences* (New York: Vintage Books/Random House, 1994).

In order to better understand how they did this, we must attend to the specificities of their forms and materiality in ways that expand upon the traditional vocabularies and methodologies in studies in decorative arts.<sup>24</sup> After singling out these aspects and briefly discussing some of the theorists mentioned above in order to establish a kind of “ground” upon which to build, I will lay out brief descriptions of the specific tables and table-issues, which are addressed in each chapter. These tables and the questions they raise are selected not at random, but rather, as the dissertation’s title indicates, episodically. I do not make an attempt at synthesizing the entire history of tables and table-life of a specific period or region. Instead, I have made a selection of tables that I have found enriching to analyze for the ways in which they encourage us to understand some of the socio-political constellations that emerged in the early modern period, particularly in relation to the topics of statecraft, identity, borders, and territory. Through these “episodes” we will consider tables as instances of self-portraiture, group-portraiture, and state-portraiture, respectively.

Coming to the table means attending to borders, surfaces, legs, middles, feet, heads, grounds, bottoms, tops, balance, and joints. One must consider each of these terms – so redolent of our own projected bodies – seriously as both physical attributes and loaded metaphors. Attending to such terms and their imbrications with bodies is particularly urgent today, in an age in which the “smart” tablet has replaced the table as a site of gathering. What happens, one might ask with Arendt (as we will see) when a shared materiality no longer holds us together? Let’s now take it again from *the top*, thinking more closely about tables’ peculiar and particular structure.

As objects, tables are often overlooked in two senses. On one hand, they are so commonplace that we scarcely take note of them, as my opening anecdote illustrated. *Of course* they stand in the middle of a dining room, or kitchen, or on the side of a couch: They have become part of an everyday landscape in which their surfaces seem to effortlessly cater to our (unconscious) needs, silently carrying and sorting our ephemera and our food, while stoically waiting on guests at parties and dinners who gather around them, taking their level tops for granted. Unlike chairs, tables are not comfortable, nor are they “ingenious” like a good desk; they just sort of stand around. On the other hand, tables are literally overlooked in the sense that we generally look over and across them. In this regard, they provide a kind of contained cartographic landscape, since they separate that which is on or at the table from the spaces around, under, and above the tabletop. The table can intensify the ways in which we perceive either the objects arranged upon it, or the faces seated around it since it isolates them and places them into sets of relationships that can be examined in a concentrated fashion, like the contents of a sieve emptied of water. The table, thus, offers a special kind of terrain — one that often escapes notice precisely because it is so omnipresent.

This was not always the case. In the early modern era, tables were not everywhere, nor did they form the focus of social life, particularly in aristocratic contexts where they seldom stood in the center of a room where people generally stood around without support. Instead, they tended to either be sidelined (especially if they were heavy, like marble topped consoles fixed to walls), or were part of a fleet of mobile furnishings (*meubles courants*) that could be whisked in for special occasions like banquets. When this happened, the table became an *occasional* spatial fixture and an object of great importance, since the court would assemble around its surface and all attention would be directed to that which lay on the table, and the seating order of those

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<sup>24</sup> A classic example of this type of expanded view would be the seminal essay by the late Martin Warnke, “Situation der Couchescke” in Jürgen Habermas, *Stichworte zur ‘Geistigen Situation der Zeit’ Bd. 2: Politik und Kultur* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982), 673-687.

invited to take part in the feast. In this manner, the table presented a map of courtly hierarchy, often reproduced in printed reports like a cartographic diagram of social relations.<sup>25</sup> The table thereby became an explicitly political object that mediated between a potentially confusing “ground” by establishing a second “ground” above the floor around which an ideal order could make itself manifest through the ways in which people and things were distributed about it. It became a medium not so much of translation, but of articulation, as well as a matrix for future social and material reproduction.<sup>26</sup>

Because of their physical structure — legs and a raised, flat support that echoes the ground underneath, but is distinct from it — the table is in general an object that creates various kinds of maps. They map the people that gather around them into social patterns, and they transform objects placed upon them into a cartographic set of data: once those objects are isolated from the ground below (thanks to the table’s raised surface) they transform into a set of linked coordinates. The table imposes a grid of correspondence between objects that might otherwise appear unrelated, but which suddenly assume a relational form thanks to their newfound proximity. This proximity is marked by the edges of the table itself, which delineate a border at once real and abstract (much like a picture’s frame).<sup>27</sup> Gathering, therefore, is only part

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<sup>25</sup> On seventeenth-century European tables in general see Peter Thornton, *Seventeenth-Century Interior Decoration in England, France and Holland*. (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1978), 226–43. See also Pierre Verlet, *French furniture and interior decoration of the 18th century*, translated from the original French language, ed. by George Savage (London: Barrie & Rockliffe, 1967). In his *L'Art du Menuisier-Carrossier* (1769), the carpenter and joiner André Jacob Roubo remarked in the chapter entitled, “*Des Tables en général; de leurs différentes especes*” that “Tables are the oldest type of furniture after chairs, or, at least the most useful.” He then proceeded to list and describe the construction techniques used to make all the tables of his age: “kitchen tables, dining tables, gaming tables, writing tables, dressing tables, night tables, beds”; and among those tables under gaming tables alone, we find quadrilles tables, billiard tables, *brélan* tables, square, round and triangular tables while on the desk front we encounter *bureaux plats* and *secrétaires*, etc. (Translation mine). This long list of specialized domestic tables, however, reflected in fact a quite recent development since it was only the eighteenth century that witnessed a veritable explosion of domestic furniture, especially of chairs and tables. Roubo, vol. 3 (Paris: Leonce Laget, 1977), 694–99. On this remarkable development of tables in the eighteenth century as an accoutrement to comfort, or *commodité*, see for example Joan DeJean, *The Age of Comfort: when Paris discovered Casual and the Modern Home Began* (New York/London: Bloomsbury, 2009). As if to emphasize the point that the table’s social centrality was so new in the eighteenth century, around 1800 Napoleon’s stepdaughter, and sister-in-law Hortense, Queen of Holland, declared in her memoirs, “*Ich war die erste in Frankreich, welche in ihrem Salon einen runden Tisch dazu gebrauchte, um am Abend daran bei Handarbeiten und Unterhaltung zu sitzen, so wie man es auf dem Lande macht.*” Cited in Hans Ottomeyer, “Gebrauch und Form von Stitzmöbeln bei Hof,” in *z.B. der Stuhl* (Gießen: Anabas-Verlag/Werkbund Archiv, 1982), 140–61. On tables and peace specifically in the Middle Ages see Gerd Althoff, “Der friedens-, bündnis- und gemeinschaftsstiftende Charakter des Mahles im früheren Mittelalter” in *Essen und Trinken in Mittelalter und Neuzeit: Vorträge eines interdisziplinären Symposiums vom 10.-13. Juni 1987 an der Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen*, ed. Irmgard Bitsch, Trude Ehlert, and Xenja von Ertzdorff (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1987), 13–26. .

<sup>26</sup> Specifically, printed diagrams of seating arrangements. See Thomas Rahn, *Herrschaft der Zeichen: Zum Zeremoniell als “Zeichensystem”* in *Die Öffentliche Tafel: Tafelzeremoniell in Europa 1300-1900*, ed. Hans Ottomeyer and Manuela Völkel (Wolftratshausen: Minerva/Deutsches Historisches Museum, 2002), 22-31.

<sup>27</sup> For Georg Simmel the job of the frame, more so than the edge of a table, was to mark the space of art as different and autonomous from the world around it so that it could appear as its own independent “whole”, an entity he posits corresponds to the “wholeness” of an individual psyche: “The essence of the work of art...is to be a whole for itself, not requiring any relation to an exterior, spinning each of its threads back into its own centre. Insofar as the work of art is that which otherwise only the world as a whole or the psyche can be, a unity of individualities, the work of art closes itself off against everything external to itself as a world of its own. Thus its boundaries mean something quite different from what one calls boundaries in a natural entity. In the case of the natural entity, boundaries are simply the site of continuing exosmosis and endosmosis with everything external, for the work of art they are that absolute

of the table's power. We can also say that the table *separates*. There are the things on top of the table and the things that are *not*; there is a distinction between those invited to it and those who are *not*. This boundary-making function defines importance—indeed existence—through the frame of presence/absence, just as a cartographer selects what appears on a map and what disappears. The boundaries framed by the table's edge demarcate “in” and “out”, as well as the lines of connections between that which is “in”: The table also, in other words, imposes separations between those who are invited. Those seated across from one another, for example, have the breadth or length of the table between them. Furthermore, the table's slab also separates the lower bodies of the *invités* from their heads and torsos, so that attention becomes concentrated on faces and hands, rather than the lower appendages. By the same token, it divides the objects on its surface from those present in space but *not* part of the *in group* on the table's top. While the table, thus, intensifies communication and proximity, it also serves as a kind of distancing mechanism that ensures bodies remain more or less autonomous *around* it, while the matrix of signification *on top* of it (no matter how chaotic) remains distinguished from the world “below” thanks to the fortifying stability of the table's legs.<sup>28</sup>

One may perceive this distancing as a double move: distance between people gathered and a distance between the field of action and the field of the “ground.” The two may be more or less related to one another. When Edmond Husserl, for example, states in the opening of his *Ideas*, “In perception properly so-called, as an explicit awareness, I am turned towards the object, to the paper, for instance, I apprehend it as being this here and now. The apprehension is a singling out, every perceived object having a background in experience. Around and about the paper lie books, pencils, ink-well, and so forth, and these in a certain sense are also ‘perceived,’ perceptually, in the ‘field of intuition’” then the philosopher is pointing at the table as the site in which philosophical perception crystallizes, I would suggest, thanks to the table's delimiting effects.<sup>29</sup> The bounded table, upon which Husserl's writing tools stand, is the object that allows him to “single out” his perceptions from their “background in experience” and then to articulate them upon the sheet of paper. This sheet takes its cues from the bounding force of the table, its flattening of perception into a bordered matrix of objects that the philosopher can transform further into a matrix of signs on the page: ideas in writing. And because this is a personal writing table, a table for one, the table's top is disconnected from the world of social contact. It is the site at which the philosopher acts alone. The table, as Sara Ahmed has argued, thus “orients” the philosopher. Along with, though perhaps more so than the chair, it is the object closest to the philosopher and the object that directs his physical and mental position. It is not so much an extension of the philosopher's body and mind as the material condition of the possibility to transform perception and thought into words, i.e. a matrix of signifiers developed through—at

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ending which exercises indifference towards and defence against the exterior and a unifying integration with respect to the interior in a *single* act. What the frame achieves for the work of art is to symbolize and strengthen this double function of its boundary. Simmel, “The Picture Frame” in *Theory, Culture & Society* Vol. 11 (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE, 1994), 11-17. We might keep Simmel's notions in mind when considering Foucault's analysis of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century sign. In chapter 3, for example, we will consider how the borders of a specific table, the borders of the King's body, and the borders of France could all share certain characteristics: are all three a work of art, or nature?

<sup>28</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague, Boston, Lancaster: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983), 72. See also the introduction and first chapter in Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), especially 25–26.

<sup>29</sup> Ahmed introduces her queer phenomenology with this Husserl text; here, I am less interested in queer vs. normative philosophy than in the formal role that the table plays in the philosopher's practice.

least in Husserl's description of the writing scenario—the matrix of objects present at the phenomenologist's table. The table not only facilitates but indeed conditions his *Ideas* while simultaneously serving as a metaphor for the production of thought.

For Hannah Arendt, however, writing later in the midst of the Cold War and the Nuclear Age, the table as a concept was not so much constitutive of private thought, but rather a metaphor for *action*. Or at least, Arendt claimed in *The Human Condition* (1958) that the table possessed and embodied the very essence of the political when the metaphor (or object) was deployed in what she termed a “public” sense. By “public” she meant a shared, material, agonistic zone created by humankind in order to call forth a shared space of “appearance”. Arendt explains,

The term ‘public’ signifies two closely interrelated but not altogether identical phenomena: It means, first, that everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity. For us, appearance—something that is being seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves—constitutes reality. Compared with the reality which comes from being seen and heard, even the greatest forces of intimate life—the passions of the heart, the thoughts of the mind, the delights of the senses—lead an uncertain, shadowy kind of existence unless and until they are transformed, deprivatized and deindividualized, as it were, into a shape to fit them for public appearance... Second, the term ‘public’ signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it. This world, however, is not identical with the earth or with nature, as the limited space for the movement of men and the general condition of organic life. It is related, rather, to the human artifact, the fabrication of human hands, as well as to affairs which go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together.<sup>30</sup>

As an artifact and *not* as nature, the table, Arendt argues, has the power to enable a shared experience of the world precisely because of its characteristic ability to gather and to separate people around its edges. She continues, “To live together in the world, means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates *and* separates men at the same time.”<sup>31</sup> Because a table preserves a certain autonomy while also bringing people together around a shared material surface—something to literally grasp—it offers a common base upon which a conversation can take place while maintaining distinctions between participants in that conversation; the table's top provides a tangible plane of shared visibility in which difference and autonomy are constitutive of that which is shared. Once this common foundation falls away, there is nothing left to prevent “our falling over each other.”<sup>32</sup>

For Arendt, the problem with modern mass society is precisely that the world between people has lost its power to *table* them in the sense of drawing them together around something common and tangible.<sup>33</sup> Instead, the “public” has been replaced by “private” pleasures and emotions so that there is no longer any common ground upon which people can assemble and

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<sup>30</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 52.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, emphasis mine.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-53.



act. Instead, we are left with a modern “enchantment with ‘small things’” and an enthrallment with private charms; her example is French:

Since the decay of their once great and glorious public realm, the French have become masters in the art of being happy among "small things," within the space of their own four walls, between chest and bed, table and chair, dog and cat and flowerpot, extending to these things a care and tenderness which, in a world where rapid industrialization constantly kills off the things of yesterday to produce today's objects, may even appear to be the world's last, purely humane corner. This enlargement of the private, the enchantment, as it were, of a whole people, does not make it public, does not constitute a public realm, but, on the contrary, means only that the public realm has almost completely receded, so that greatness has given way to charm everywhere; for while the public realm may be great, it cannot be charming precisely because it is unable to harbor the irrelevant.<sup>34</sup>

Rather than standing at the center of a shared world, the “charming” private table is but one of many accoutrements of *commodité*<sup>35</sup> of the genre developed so gleefully in eighteenth-century France: we may refer to the list of tables proffered by the furniture maker André Jacob Roubo including kitchen tables, dining tables, gaming tables, writing tables, dressing tables, night tables, beds and among those tables listed under gaming tables alone, we find quadrilles tables, billiard tables, *brélan* tables, square, round and triangular tables while on the desk front we encounter *bureaux plats* and *secrétaires*, not to mention small side tables like *guéridons*, *chiffonniers*, *vide-poches*, *bonheurs du jour*, and many more.<sup>36</sup> *Commodité* is, of course, close etymologically to commodity. Indeed, as Arendt’s analysis underscores, private “charms” and comforts are purchasable, part of a cycle of consumption that, she implies, replaces public action with the power to buy and to “furnish” one’s space with any number of personalized conveniences. What now, she seems to demand, is to be shared other than the base-line of a price? This replacement of the public table, the stately table, with the commodity of private charm for Arendt resembles “a spiritualistic séance where a number of people gathered around a table might suddenly, through some magic trick, see the table vanish from their midst, so that two persons sitting opposite each other were no longer separated but also would be entirely unrelated to each other by anything tangible.”<sup>37</sup>

In the passage of the public table to the private commodity, Arendt appears to draw on Marx who also sets the table front and center of *Capital* in his analysis of the commodity’s allure. It is the table that Marx chooses to highlight the oddness of a commodity, which appears, “at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood” though its analysis “shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties.”<sup>38</sup> The table, Marx notes, is something made by man out of material “furnished by Nature” in order to produce something of use. Yet, as soon as the table “steps forth as a commodity”, it is no longer

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Roughly translated: comfort and convenience. Ewa Lajer-Burcharth provides an excellent analysis of the idea of *commodité* in her analysis of the painter François Boucher’s work in *The Painter’s Touch: Boucher, Chardin, Fragonard* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 22-31. See also DeJean *The Age of Comfort*, 2009.

<sup>36</sup> Viz. note 24 above.

<sup>37</sup> Arendt, 52-53.

<sup>38</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch01.htm#S1>, last accessed September 19, 2019.

something useful, but something “transcendent.”<sup>39</sup> Marx writes evocatively, “It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than ‘table-turning’ ever was.”<sup>40</sup>

Like Arendt, Marx equates the transformation of use-value into exchange value to a *séance* here. In fact, he describes something even more powerful than “table-turning”: the enchantment of the commodity casts a spell over the world, so that the simple table now seems to enter the stage by virtue of its own legs; it appears to move about of its own volition, or as Jacques Derrida writes on this passage, “it emancipates itself on its own initiative: all alone, autonomous and automaton, its fantastic silhouette moves on its own, free and without attachment.”<sup>41</sup> In this process, the commodity makes itself both visible *and* invisible in the sense that we no longer tend to notice what has transpired with the usefulness of the table. And all at once, the useful table itself seems too trivial to notice. An ordinary, sensuous thing has become something altogether more extraordinary, an “enchantment” to return to Arendt’s language imbued with a special power that allows it to appear to act on its own, to use its own body and “brain.”<sup>42</sup> Like a human, the table thus appears to “act”: to stride onstage with its legs, and stand on its “head”, or top, which thanks to the spell of the commodity seems to twinkle with a mysteriously autonomous energy.

In this dissertation we will only briefly attend to commodities and tables, but I wanted to introduce these ideas about tables in order to open our eyes to various lenses through which we can analyze their qualities. Marx points out here that the transformation of the object into the commodity has led to its being “overlooked” as an object of use—one of the qualities of tables I noted previously. For him, this facet of the table as an ignored object is part and parcel of capitalism’s ideological film. For Arendt, this is part of a larger narrative of a fall; in her account, there was a time in which the table was a public stage, a stage upon which great acts could be performed, ultimately a kind of democratic object. The final thinker I want to introduce into the mix turns this notion on its proverbial head.

Written from the perspective of post-structural theory a decade after Arendt, Michel Foucault’s *The Order of Things* (1966), bring us back to the seventeenth century. In his now classic theoretical tract, Foucault dissects what he understands as an epochal shift from the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries, or from a world governed by a logic of ambiguities and equivalences in which meanings were overlapping and unpredictable to a classical *episteme* in

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (New York & London: Routledge, 1994), 191.

<sup>42</sup> See Derrida (Ibid) for his discussion of the ghostly relationship between the commodity/exchange value of the table and its use value. We might note, as Derrida points out, that in his description of the table’s exotic dance upon the stage of the market place, Marx writes, “One may recall that China and the tables began to dance when the rest of the world appeared to be standing still ‘pour encourager les autres.’” See Derrida, 192. The French is in the original and it is tempting, in light of the history of porcelain and the French and European obsession with it in the early modern period, to point as we have before to eighteenth-century French elite furniture as an important node in the transformation that Arendt describes as a loss of greatness in French culture. Of course, this *is* the dominant narrative that sees the Rococo as a period of degeneration into fancies and follies. For revisions of this thesis see for example any number of works including most recently Lajer-Burcharth (2018) or Katie Scott *the Rococo Interior: decoration and social spaces in early 18<sup>th</sup>-century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) or Scott and Melissa Hyde eds., *Rococo echo: art, history and historiography from Cochin to Coppola* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2014).

which texts have been purged of ambiguity and transformed into “signs.”<sup>43</sup> Tables were a means of collecting these “signs” which were purposefully disambiguating the signs from their environments (Husserl’s “background in experience”). The table provided an overview, granted to a person with a “superior” position.

The Foucauldian disambiguated signs purport to convey a truth about the world precisely because they are extracted from it and thus are able to manifest a level of critical distance. Cartesian thought is one excellent example of this phenomenon. Instead of discovering knowledge *in* the world, Descartes’s *cogito* turned famously away from the world to find it, buffered from worldly ambiguities and contingencies in the small, warm, steamy enclosure of his kitchen (*poêle*) in Amsterdam, to which he had retreated in 1636 in the face of “wars, that are not yet over.”<sup>44</sup> For Descartes, as for Foucault, the seventeenth-century sign justifies its truth claims precisely because it erects a boundary between itself and the world (so that there is a “bond established, inside knowledge, between the *idea of one thing* and the *idea of another*”).<sup>45</sup> Foucault continues, “from the seventeenth century onward, the whole domain of the sign is divided between the certain and the probable: that is to say, there can no longer be an unknown sign, a mute mark. This is not because men are in possession of all the possible signs, but because there can be no sign until there exists a *known* possibility of substitution between two *known* elements: it can be constituted only as an act of knowing.”<sup>46</sup> The sign is thus no longer something to be encountered *in* the world, but instead resides in a hermetic universe of its own. It is in *this* bounded, framed world that knowledge not only dwells but is *produced*. For, according to Foucault, classical epistemology is predicated upon a process of division: the sign must be separated from the “the total impression with which it is confusedly linked” in order for analysis to take place and for knowledge to constitute itself.<sup>47</sup>

This process of analysis never ceases as long as signs are being produced and stored since “the constitution of the sign is thus inseparable from analysis”.<sup>48</sup> It builds itself a relational network of signs and the larger the network, the greater the potential for more analytical knowledge: the totality of signs, their progression ultimately finds fruition in the “complete table of signs”.<sup>49</sup> This table becomes equivalent, in the seventeenth century, to a map of the sort that began to be produced mid-century by geographers like Nicolas Sanson, who introduced “tables” as a pedagogical means of learning about the world that corresponded to scaled, bounded units (nations, kingdoms, administrative units, financial divisions) on the maps he produced for the French crown. Foucault’s analysis complicates Arendt’s metaphorical and democratic table. When it came to statecraft, seventeenth century tables—in spite of their *potential* gathering qualities—were generally produced to be seen from one point of view: the *overview* (*Kavalierperspektive*) of the monarch.

Hence the other sort of “overlooking” that I have connected to the table. In order for the table of signs to be useful, information must be laid out in a manner that is no longer as confusing as it is in the world, or in a lengthy narrative text. Elements must offer themselves

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<sup>43</sup> Foucault, 200-207.

<sup>44</sup> René Descartes, *Oeuvres complètes*, eds. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery vol. 6 (Paris: Léopold Cerf, 1898-1910), 11. See Tom Conley, *The Self-Made Map: Cartographic Writing in Early Modern France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 293.

<sup>45</sup> Foucault, 63.

<sup>46</sup> Foucault, 59.

<sup>47</sup> Foucault, 61.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

clearly to the viewer, otherwise the overview is (literally) *at hand* and graspable. Foucault's analysis grounds itself in an astonishing number of practices, but one particular text is exemplary in what concerns the framing of information (signs) for the purposes of governance in the "Classical" era: the political tract entitled *Entwurf gewisser Staats-tafeln* ("Sketch for Certain Tables of State") penned in 1680 by German polymath Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. In his "Sketch" Leibniz suggested that sovereigns should assiduously gather statistical information about all aspects of their realm. The sum of all of this information could mark the limits of a territory if it were laid out in tabular form. Like a game board laid open on a table, this "table of state" would offer the ruler an overview thanks to the rules that would furnish a unified body of information in the table, drawn together and rendered coherent thanks to its submission to a homogenizing format. Since, Leibniz wrote, "one cannot always have the thing in Nature in front of one's eyes"<sup>50</sup> the table would gather that "which belongs together" and make it available "in the blink of an eye."<sup>51</sup> This can be understood in relation to a physical table not so much in terms of semantic slippage on my part, but rather quite literally.

As we have noted, when objects are placed on tables, or people gathered around them, they form a sort of selective cartography. Early modern treatises on governance were not oblivious to this. The most famous, and first, treatise on state museums for example, Samuel Quiccheberg's *Inscriptiones* (written for his Bavarian Kurfürst Patron in 1565) advised the Prince to pull together elements relevant to the production of all aspects of knowledge, particularly about the Prince's realm. Models, maps, bits of earth and rocks, marvels, armor, every last bit should find its way into the princely collection, which would form a kind of microcosm of not only worldly macrocosm, but his realm in particular. Furniture was essential to this endeavor. How else was the information to be made sense of for the viewer and the Prince? Quiccheberg's text, therefore, highlights not only how objects should be divided according to tabular form (Ramist "tables of sacred and secular classifications. And also historical catalogs; and chronologies illustrated on enormous panels") but also how they should be displayed "like certain maps that not infrequently have been *broadly spread out*."<sup>52</sup> There ought also to be "also tables in the shape of branches, and others that place the division of individual disciplines and their main headings fully before the viewer's eye" as well as literal tables and chests of drawers as furnishings to contain objects and make them visible within the larger tabular organizational scheme, "For there is no discipline under the sun, no field of study, no practice, that might not most properly seek its instruments from these prescribed furnishings" which include "narrow coffer, cabinets, or boxes, to supplement the "vast walls and...enormous tables, or small, tiered tables."<sup>53</sup> For Leibniz, as for Quiccheberg a century earlier, this expanded "table" would form a sort of brain in which "the Connection between things" (*Die Connexion der dinge sich darin*) served not only to represent knowledge, but also to create it.<sup>54</sup> The magical qualities of Marx's commodity table is replaced in the Leibnizian *staats-tafel* with the magic of knowledge production, in the form of a vast table of signs that, like the prince, must be able to rule itself (the "*erleichterung der löblichen selbst-regierung*"). Quiccheberg's furnishings and Leibniz' data

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<sup>50</sup> "Man nicht allzeit die dinge in Natura vor augen haben und besichtigen...kan." Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Politische Schriften" 3. Band: 1677-1689 in *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR, Band IV/3 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1986), 345.

<sup>51</sup> "...was zusammengehöret, gleichsam in einem augenblick." Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Samuel Quiccheberg, *The First Treatise on Museums: Samuel Quiccheberg's Inscriptiones, 1565*, trans. Mark A. Meadow and Bruce Robertson (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013), 74.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Leibniz, 345.

table are not one and the same thing, but they are analogous to one another and both emerge in the developing early modern context of thinking about how governance could be both organized and staged through objects.

It would seem, therefore, that this early modern governance (in its ideal, or propositional form) was predicated by the second half of the seventeenth century in certain symbolic, but also literal ways upon the production of tables as both literal supports and containers of signs. On one hand, as an instrument of state, these containers needed to remain closed, sealed off, private. Leibniz suggests, as a historical example, that the Prince follow the example of the young Louis XIV who kept everything that the deceased Cardinal Mazarin had dictated for him in a “small iron box” because “therein was contained the concept of his entire state” (*weilen darinn der begriff seines ganzen staats enthalten*).<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, the table also could lay these secrets open. It ought to make them accessible to the prince, but the very fact of their accessibility implied already an incipient new form of territoriality in which the assets of the state determined action, rather than the Prince.

However, the magic of the table could be seen, if we follow Foucault’s analysis, as lying in its ability to present information *as if* it were indexically transparent to the world, even though it was produced to achieve certain ideological goals. A table is open for all to see and to understand, but it remains infused by the magic—or in the case of the early modern state, the shadowy *arcana imperii*—which guards its secrets and produces law from the arrangement of information the selective nature of which contains its own sort of enchantment. As anthropologist Jack Goody has written of the table, “one of the features of the graphic mode is the tendency to arrange terms in (linear) rows and (hierarchical) columns in such a way that each item is allocated a single position, where it stands in a definite, permanent, and unambiguous relationship to the others.”<sup>56</sup> In the case of early modern *staats-tafel* and literal tables of state, this semantic hierarchy was also a social hierarchy: the table as an instrument affirmed the supreme position of the Prince as Sovereign, or *Superanus* (“the one positioned above”).<sup>57</sup> The table’s edge is thus a slippery liminal territory. It is at once part of physical object with particular qualities (sharp, hard, soft, continuous, crumbling, etc.) and also part of a larger sign-system, embedded in socially determined epistemological universes independent from, but connected to a specific material table—the table’s openness and blunt flatness help to mediate a sense of transparency between the bounded *place* of the table and the *space* of the world lying outside of those boundaries. The early modern table was a *place-maker* as both a material presence of *standing* and a matrix of signification.

By now (at the very latest) the art historian has grown weary of these speculative ruminations. We have broken the cardinal rule: you must work *out* from the objects and not *impose* a theoretical matrix upon them. As I have stated, however, since we are going to operate episodically in this project, I thought it would be useful to begin with this overview of some

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<sup>55</sup> Leibniz, 344. “Wise people,” wrote the Port-Royal, “avoid exposing their advantages to the eyes of others as much as they can; they flee from presenting themselves head on and from letting themselves be looked at in private...in order that in their discourse will be seen only the truth they propose.”<sup>55</sup> Cited in Louis Marin, *Portrait of the King* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 173.

<sup>56</sup> Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 68. Likewise, a list relies on discontinuity and not continuity, “it depends on physical placement, on location; it can be read in different directions, both sideways and downwards, up and down, as well as left and right; it has a clear-cut beginning and a precise end, that is, a boundary, and edge...and the existence of boundaries, external and internal, brings greater visibility to categories, at the same time as making them more abstract.” *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>57</sup> Helmut Puff, *Miniature Monuments: Modeling German History* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 84.

concepts of table-ness, tabling them so that we can spread them out like the contents of a tool box that we can carry around with us to the various stations that will follow. So let us now proceed to outline the chapters that will follow.

We have seen how tables operate symbolically as well as materially; this dual approach continues throughout each of the chapters, which juxtapose the semiotic and social at every turn, indeed often pointing to the mutual constitutions — entanglements really — of these two systems of organization and the structures of hierarchy therein. The first episode of “On the Table” takes us to Elizabethan England. In this chapter, we will consider a specific table: the so-called “Eglantine Table” located today at Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire, England. This table belonged to a remarkable late Tudor Englishwoman named Elizabeth (Bess) of Hardwick, and, as I explore, it *stands* as a remnant of the a nexus between person, place, and property being forged — or mapped, as it were — during this period in England specifically. Accordingly, my analysis of Bess’s particular table reflects on how late Tudor tables might reveal more about processes of “viewing” (think: the overview), surveying, and establishing ownership of self and space through the erection of upright viewing platforms, whether tables or homes, a process that established itself in England beginning in the 1570s. The table could be both a portrait and an instrument for stabilizing dynastic claims through the mapping of landed estates. Tables connected views inside and outside the home in ways that give occasion to pause and consider the implications of understanding “status” in terms of vertical “standing”.

From a “real” (rectangular) Elizabethan table, we will then move to a “fictive” or rhetorical round table that occupies the center of one of the most influential paintings of early modern diplomacy: Dutch artist Gerard Ter Borch’s seminal *The Swearing of the Oath of Ratification of the Treaty of Münster; 15 May 1648*. Completed in the context of the Westphalian Peace agreements in 1648, Ter Borch’s painting places a table center stage in the diplomatic peace process. Westphalia, while perhaps not marking a rupture in western political history, nonetheless was an extraordinary event. It was the first multilateral peace conference that aimed to bring together all European states (minus Russia and the Ottoman Empire) with the aim of establishing a new international political order that crossed confessional boundaries. Ter Borch’s image from this peace conference became, as we will explore, a defining image of peace in western visual culture. The chapter traces this development and dissects the various roles that the table performs in it as a foundation, an instrument of communication, a neutral ground, and a representation. Establishing the grounding moment of a new European political order with the help of a table-cum-representation had profound effects upon how peace came to be imagined, choreographed and pictured. We still feel these effects today, although the reign of the table as a “neutral” centering device may well be on the wane.

On the way to and from Ter Borch’s rendering of Westphalia, we will make two transitional stops. The first of these interludes (“no corners”) will lead us from the hegemony of the rectangular table to the seventeenth-century embrace of round gate-leg tables (in England). The second interlude (“the table’s edge”) will examine cross-cultural diplomatic interactions at tables between Europeans and non-Europeans (in this case Ottomans) who had different cultural expectations of how a table should stand, socially and physically. How were Ottomans and Europeans supposed to gather together, if their cultures espoused different conditions and conceptualizations of how one was to meet (and eat)?

Chapter three focuses again on a specific table, but shifts geographically and temporally, away from aristocratic property in late Tudor England to late seventeenth-century absolutist France, around the time when Leibniz was writing his *Staats-tafel* treatise. The table that I take

up here is a marble table, which was gifted to Louis XIV in the 1680s by one of the members of the newly-founded *Académie des Sciences* in Paris. This table is, unlike Bess's table, also literally a map, a field of political and geographical signs designed in the service of the state, rendered in the form of a marble mosaic. In this episode, we will consider the remarkable merging in this object between the body of the king and the body of the state, which emerges as a figure *of ground* in the form of this table. Figure and ground are not separate here, but rather conjoined in this unique object. In a series of *parcours*, we will consider not only the context of the table/map as a gift to the state, but also the ways in which the materiality of the table (marble) relied upon the mobilization of a massive state-sponsored infrastructure, which included furniture production in newly established royal *manufactures*. We will also visit the first home of this table in the King's cabinet of curiosities, and consider why the table-map and the suggestions it made about geography appear not to have found favor with Louis XIV. This will bring us to the dissemination of maps and tables outside of the court to a broader public, and the ways in which the spread of geographical templates potentially generated collective forms of subjectivity predicated not upon an understanding of the state as "King" but the state as a geographic entity, accessible at and through less exclusive tables than the monarch's.

Each of these chapters is a small episode in what is obviously a much more vast constellation of "furnishing" politics and facilitating political (and visual) change.<sup>58</sup> Thus, again, I make no claims to offer anything approaching a larger synthesis of what "tables meant" in seventeenth-century Europe. Instead, I try to show how they could mean different things, all of which were crucially important and in no way irrelevant. Perhaps an enduring question, or "stakes" of this text is to encourage us to consider the roles that seemingly ubiquitous material objects like tables play not only in reflecting, but in quite literally building present and future political realities.

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<sup>58</sup> Here, "furnishing" politics is to be understood in both the sense of providing furniture for political staging and also in the sense of the politics of furniture – what kinds, what style, who uses it and how, what is it made of, etc.

## Episode 1

### Surveying the Table: Person, Place, and Property in Late Tudor England

It's my house and I live here  
(I wanna tell you)  
It's my house and I live here<sup>59</sup>

#### Introduction: Placing the table (or, the table as self-portrait)

*1567 was an urgently important year for Lady Elizabeth St. Loe, née Hardwick. Her debts paid off, her children growing, recently widowed for the third time (but not terribly upset about it, unlike the second time), she may well have sat in the upper chambers of the home she'd spent years building (still unfinished) at Chatsworth and contemplated her prospects while pleasantly gazing at the "verie fayre" colored wainscoting surrounding her, replete with planet motifs.<sup>60</sup> Now the stars had aligned favorably again: she was to marry a fourth time, this time to a Peer! But what about her beloved house? She wasn't nearly done working on it, although she'd already assembled an impressive collection of furniture – inlaid wood, almost all of it, to match the walls.<sup>61</sup> Woodwork, she'd decided, rather than textiles; it dovetailed well with her life, she mused, reflecting on how nimbly the joiners and inlayers had slotted together the wooden armatures of the eleven inlaid stools in her High Great Chamber and embellished them with still more "markentrie."<sup>62</sup>*

*How clever; maximizing the value of each surface for effect while ensuring that the details all cohered smoothly, she thought. So much variety, but all well-ordered and neatly fit into place, not unlike the details of the prenuptial agreement she had been busy drafting with her future husband, with an eye to maintaining her own income (independent of the Earl's – not about to lose herself in this marriage) and ensuring a financially solid foundation for Henry, William, Charles, Mary, and Elizabeth. She'd already done well to marry Frances to George Pierrepont's eldest, Henry. Sir George had been so insistent and kind.<sup>63</sup> Temperance and little Lucre had passed, sadly. Her eyes clouded, briefly, remembering on the bright side however that it was while laying in with Temperance that she'd really come into her own in her second marriage in relation to managing the household – William didn't seem bothered at all that the accounts were then written up in less finicky handwriting. Anyway, it was more like she was taking notes on their spending for her own benefit by then and not for him, they both agreed.*

*So many bits and pieces to secure. Ends to tie up. How should she commemorate the coming marriage anyway, what type of object would be suitable to mark this new turn in her life? What could connect her past – and her work at Chatsworth – to her future life as Countess of Shrewsbury? Was there something that could signify her new status as George Talbot's new wife, but also advertise her individual taste and independence? What about a table? inlaid, like*

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<sup>59</sup> "It's My House": song by Nickolas Ashford and Valerie Simpson. Lead vocals by Diana Ross for her album *The Boss*, issued by Motown, 1979.

<sup>60</sup> Gillian White, "'that whyche ys nedefoulle and nesary': The Nature and Purpose of the Original Furnishings and Decoration of Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire" (PhD diss., University of Warwick, 2005), 142.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Mary S. Lovell, *Bess of Hardwick, First Lady of Chatsworth* (London: Abacus, 2006), 179.



*the rest of her house. You could commission one in London these days, where inlayers had easier access to those new pattern books from Antwerp – strapwork would be fitting for a marriage, she thought, a wedding knot. Sir St. Loe had always complained that she spent too much time up at Chatsworth. So had Frances Cobham, her dear friend at Court; maybe she knows a good joiner in London?*<sup>64</sup> *No, she'd ask Thynne; he'd already sent his plasterer.*<sup>65</sup>

*She enjoyed it here at Chatsworth. (Fig. 1) Always something to attend to and she could see the pieces of the puzzle coming together so handily. So why not a table, for the wedding, that is- something with more “coulored woodes”, to go with the rest of her great high chamber and galerie?*<sup>66</sup> *Something detailed, something balanced. Something urgently large and important. Something that would not be eclipsed by her new French furniture. Something to take note of. Something resembling the marriage she'd carefully planned.*

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The first episode of “on the table” takes us to late sixteenth-century England. Derbyshire to be precise. And it begins with one specific table, now known as the Eglantine Table (ca. 1567), which stands today in the High Great Chamber of Hardwick New Hall in the former home of Bess of Hardwick, the woman who, this chapter will suggest, commissioned it.<sup>67</sup> (Figs. 2-5) At the very least, she owned it and placed it in a specific spot in the house that she built to commemorate her rise from small-time country gentry to the pinnacle of English society. The table celebrated her fourth marriage, to the Earl of Shrewsbury, one of England’s richest men and it is certainly one of the best preserved and magnificently crafted Elizabethan pieces of furniture that survives today.

The table is remarkable, however, not only for its fine workmanship, but also for the perspective that it opens for us today on what tables could mean in early modern England and how they organized not only people, but also modes of seeing and understanding space and place. As we will see, the Eglantine table is an object that was deeply bound up in Bess of Hardwick’s biography and social ambitions. Because it was so intimately intertwined with her life, the table can be understood as a kind of self-portrait.<sup>68</sup> It is this interchangeability between

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<sup>64</sup> As White writes, there is just one documentary source pointing to an inlayer at Chatsworth, from December 9 1577, when 5 pounds were “payd to taylor the inlayer aforhand toward the payment of viij for two years wadge to begin at Candlemas” (Devonshire MSS, Chatsworth, Hardwick MS 4, fol. 34 cited *Ibid*, 144.

<sup>65</sup> Kate Hubbard, *Devices & Desires: Bess of Hardwick and the Building of Elizabethan England* (London: Vintage, 2018), 61.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 142.

<sup>67</sup> The Eglantine is a type of English rose, also known as sweet briar. *Aculeatus*, in Latin (whence the name derives) means thorny, or prickly. The flower is known for its pink petals and distinctive apple-like fragrance. William Jewitt christened the table “Aeglentyne” in the first article written on the object in 1882, referring to the central panel and it’s mention of the divine scent of the Eglantine rose (we will discuss this later). Llewellyn Jewitt’s “The ‘Aeglentyne’ Inlaid Table at Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire.” *The Reliquary*. Volume 23 (1882-83), 2-8. He also identified it with the inlaid table “by the window” recorded in the Hardwick 1602 inventory.

<sup>68</sup> In fact, the term table in Tudor England referred not to what we today understand as the object of the table, with a top and legs, but rather just to the top. The table was a “boarde”, as in room and board, simply the planar top of today’s table, and was referred to as such from the 15<sup>th</sup> through the 16<sup>th</sup> century. “Table” most often at that time implied a picture, or two dimensional representation. It was in the 16<sup>th</sup> century that the term began to slowly take on its modern meaning, but as S.W. Wolsey and R.W. Luff note, in the 1552 inventory for Paget Place, for example, one finds several items termed table that indicate pictures (“A table having in it the five woundes embrodered upon blacke Satten”) “Another Table wt. the whole stature of the Kynge’s Maiestie stayned upon a clothe with a curteyne of green sarconette”, etc. This meaning seems to have hung on through the 17<sup>th</sup> century, since in 1620 Lady Dorothy

owner and object that the present chapter explores, examining how tables could articulate ideas about personhood, forming a portrait of their owner that marked that owner's claims over both space and (self-) possession. Bess' visage did not appear on the table, but as we will see, the table's iconography, as well as its placement in her home and the way it was made (as a parquetry mosaic of wood) can be understood as both reflecting *and* organizing viewing experiences in a manner that was particular to the ways in which Bess, as a business-savvy, late Elizabethan, English woman may have viewed and *built* the world around her. In late Tudor England, modes of seeing and defining property were changing; what it meant to own and visualize "one's own" came to assume new forms. This episode will attempt to recover these shifting modes of viewing through the lens of the Eglantine table. The table, as we will see, was transitional in many ways: it marked transitions (and transactions) between Bess, her husbands, and her children as well as between types of tables. The Eglantine itself was a traditional "long table", *the* marker of dynastic ambition in an English country estate. Yet its placement at Hardwick New Hall, its iconography, and use presage a move to new types of tables that would ultimately supplant the long table with new types of sociable surfaces.

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The Eglantine table is first and foremost large. And it is heavy. Made of walnut, ash, and fruit wood, its long rectangle measures a grand ten feet long (ca. three feet wide); the stretcher bars around the feet of its legs help to convey a sense that this mass must be distributed, contained, and balanced if the table is to stand. Carrying it up the stairs to the High Great Chamber on Hardwick New Hall's second (or American third) floor must have been quite a bother, though presumably it only needed to be done once in the object's life since it has resided there for more than three hundred years. Its top is inlaid with an intricate wooden mosaic that combines three registers of imagery: music, game playing, and heraldic juxtapositions of Bess' families' coats of arms and those of her fourth husband, George Talbot, sixth Earl of Shrewsbury. These are embedded in the top's polished wooden expanse, supported by four – for Tudor taste – relatively subdued carved and turned legs, rendered in a somewhat classicizing style (replete with triglyphs, for example, on an architrave) that invite the beholder to inspect and admire the intricacy of the woodwork and the tabletop's interwoven layers of representation.

Most accounts of Hardwick Hall mention the Eglantine. It is one of the best known examples of fine late Elizabethan furniture, much of which has not survived. Yet these mentions tend to either describe the object either in passing, or to focus on one particular aspect of its iconography (e.g. musical instruments) at the expense of the others.<sup>69</sup> My analysis, however, will try to understand how these layers operate together. What do we make of the particular combination of these elements, beyond the fact that music, gaming, and coats of arms were all

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Shirley had "Fifteen English pictures, hanged in tables att the upper end of the galerie." Luff and Wolsey, *Furniture in England: The Age of the Joiner* (London: Arthur Barker Limited, 1968), 44. Susan E. James emphasizes that of course a period audience would have known the difference based on context. While this is true, there is certainly an etymological suggestion that links the table as an object to the table as a picture, one that we will exploit here, aware that 16<sup>th</sup>-century English people would have understood the differences, but maybe also have drawn parallels. See James, *The Feminine Dynamic in English Art: Women as Consumers, Patrons, and Painters 1485-1603* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 3.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, David Collins' article, "A 16th-Century Manuscript in Wood: The Eglantine Table at Hardwick Hall" published in *Early Music* 4, no. 3 (1976): 275–79. Jewitt is an obvious exception.

part of the constellation of preoccupations for England's upper crust in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century? What qualities do they have in common? Moreover, why render them in these types of wood, on a table? And why render them in inlay work, beside the fact that exquisite fine wood marquetry and parquetry showed off the extent of their owner's wealth (the more detail, the greater the expense)? The leitmotif that I propose to identify here as a kind of unifying factor – encouraged by the table's position in the uppermost reaches of the house, as well as the ways in which it lays bare its visual contents – is the trope of the overview conjoined with the theme of joining itself, specifically marriage as an economic arrangement. By understanding how Bess fashioned herself as a person with an overview, specifically, a wife in control of her finances and, therefore, her social relations, that we must understand this object. For this enables us grasp how a table could serve as a particular sort of Tudor self-portrait: an image of 16<sup>th</sup>-century English network management.

Indeed, it is from above that we inspect the Eglantine's form, our gaze unimpeded by visual "events" that would threaten the unity of the object's detailed iconography and skilled craftsmanship. The table, I will suggest, asks the observer to comb through a large volume of syncopated details and make sense of them, to puzzle them together. To use a turn of phrase suggested by the Eglantine's trompe l'oeil depictions of interrupted card games, the "winner" at the table is the one who has made the most advantageous inspection of the what the object offers to the eye, which is to say, the winning hand belongs to s/he who is best able to attend to and make sense of an overload of detail and (visual) information that is – though plentiful – also somewhat oblique, rather than forthcoming. Fig.5

In honing in on the view from above I want to think about how tables are overlooked in the more direct and physical sense that adults usually look down over them. In this regard, they tend to invite a particular sort of gaze. This gaze, as we saw in the introduction, is one that scans a surface raised above the ground, but below our eyes. It's a type of looking predicated upon gathering information and making sense of the relationships on the bounded tabletop thanks to the mechanism of the overview. In this manner, the table's plane operates rather like a map, furnishing a network of signs separated (or perhaps liberated) from the unbounded opacity of the ground below thanks to an imposed set of borders. The resulting delimited field of vision conveniently exposes its contents to the eye in a way that makes them easier to see, assess, manage, and potentially possess, while at the same time divorcing the information presented from the social processes that put it on the table in the first place. In terms of my reading of the Eglantine table, this observation suggests that the object not only displays wealth through its expensive deployment of skilled wood-crafting and stylish design, but also makes manifest a mechanism by which wealth is accumulated and augmented: attention to accounting for detail, a skill that Bess had trained herself to develop assiduously over eight decades, as we will see.

Questions about the relationship between managing information and place-making will, therefore, inform the chapter's trajectory. These questions are also why I have decided to focus on an Elizabethan table for Elizabethan England provides rich material to think about how the overview and ownership became historically intertwined. It was first in Tudor England that English landowners began to build houses like Hardwick New Hall– known today as "prodigy houses" – that were ostentatiously tall and filled with windows and viewing platforms. These vantage points allowed the landowning class to look *down* upon their lands, transforming the world into a new aesthetic form: a landscape vista to be enjoyed from a vantage point that

connoted upward mobility, social exclusivity, and distinction.<sup>70</sup> It was also in Tudor England that English landowners first began using cartography to chart and catalogue their estates. And Bess of Hardwick was acutely interested in questions of real estate and asset management, as were all of the Englishmen who built prodigy houses together with the surveyor who also built Hardwick New Hall, Robert Smythson.<sup>71</sup>

In contrast to Smythson's other patrons, however, Bess was a Tudor woman and that meant that occupying the perspective of the overview was a more complex endeavor. Philosopher Michel de Certeau has observed that a place (*lieu*) is a *space*, which has been ordered in a manner that excludes the possibility of two things being, or belonging, in the same location. A proper place – a space of propriety – as he thus notes, is one occupied by a singular entity, rather than a multiplicity of multivalent possibilities (*espace*).<sup>72</sup> The *place* is stable, and proper, because it seamlessly reinforces – rather than disrupts – a dominant ideology. If that ideology prioritizes private property, then when a table stands in for its owner, it also marks that owner's *place*, a spot that is his alone. Yet, as the present chapter will explore, this singularity of ownership in early modern England was complicated by questions of gender, already manifest in the gendered term “his”. If women were legally subordinate to men in the Tudor era, how were they to mark “their” place? As daughters, wives, and widows, their singularity was generally qualified by her relationship to a man.<sup>73</sup>

Bess of Hardwick, however, famously carved out a *place* for herself in this context, designing and building not one, but several homes, that conspicuously displayed her signature, emblazoning it on the land like a coat of arms on a map. (Figs. 6-7) She also owned a table that, as I will argue, did similar leg work. Moreover, the Eglantine is of particular interest in terms of *gendered* self-portraiture because it positions itself as a *relational* object in numerous senses. On one hand, it advertises itself as a bridge between Bess and her fourth husband, George Talbot,

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<sup>70</sup> For a general history of the evolution of the English Country House see especially Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978). See also John Summerson, *Architecture in Britain, 1530 to 1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press Pelican History of Art, 1993). On Hardwick Hall in particular, see also Girouard, *Robert Smythson & the Elizabethan Country House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 143–64.

<sup>71</sup> On Smythson's other patrons, see Girouard, *Robert Smythson*, and also Alice T. Friedman, *House and Household in Elizabethan England: Wollaton Hall and the Willoughby Family* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1989). Smythson's collaborators/patrons included Francis Willoughby, the English coal magnate and “project man” who built Wollaton Hall, Bess and her husband George Talbot, and John Thynne, the money conscious, ambitious man who employed Smythson while completing one of several redesigns of his house Longleat in Somerset. On Thynne, see Hubbard, 44–46. All were well acquainted with one another over a lengthy period of time, and each of these patrons was characterized by an acute interest in making money through new 16th century schemes of land and resource exploitation, as detailed for example in Joan Thirsk, *Economic Policy and Projects: The Development of a Consumer Society in Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978). These included growing cash crops like woad and tobacco, as well as mining for coal, smelting iron, and manufacturing glass. “Projects” and “Projectors” were terms used in the period in part to designate these entrepreneurs, as Thirsk details in e.g. “Projects for Gentlemen, Jobs for the Poor: Mutual Aid in the Vale of Tewkesbury, 1600-1630” in Thirsk, *The Rural Economy of England: Collected Essays* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1984), 287–308.

<sup>72</sup> Michel de Certeau. “Spatial Stories” in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley/London/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), especially 117–118.

<sup>73</sup> See e.g. Amy Louise Erickson, *Women & Property in Early Modern England* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), Barbara J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women 1450-1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). See also Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977). For a general overview of economics and family life in early modern England see also Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain, 1470-1750* (London: Penguin, 2002), 30–50.

the sixth Earl of Shrewsbury because its iconography appears to commemorate their marriage in 1567. But, as I will suggest, the Eglantine also serves as a bridge that links Bess to her second husband, Sir William Cavendish, as well as to the children that she bore and raised with him. Moreover, both the iconography and the placement of the table in Bess' final, and grandest, home spatialize further sets of social relations, between guests, household, community, and the Derbyshire countryside that Bess could view from the windows next to the table and the banqueting rooms on her roof. Most importantly, the table *placed* Bess as the central node, or manager, of all of these relationships; she was the one who gazed down upon and controlled those who came into her orbit – or at least, that was her aim. Our task will be to unfold how the visual form of this object in particular and its cultural role intersected to convey this central managerial position, which, I will argue was *hers* in multiple senses even though the object connected her to numerous men.

The story of Bess' life is in some ways quite literally inlaid into her table's surface. This life has been thoroughly scrutinized by many biographers, historians, and art historians because of its unique narrative: a woman born of modest means (to an impoverished Derbyshire gentry family) married four times, each time rising further up the social ladder until she reached its pinnacle, becoming the wealthiest woman in England after the queen, with whom she was well acquainted.<sup>74</sup> It's difficult *not* to indulge in the more thrilling and salacious aspects of Bess' fabled biography: being poisoned by her third husband's brother, scheming to produce a potential heir to the throne with Lady Margaret Lennox, or serving with her soon-to-be acrimoniously estranged fourth husband as the "jailer" of Mary Queen of Scots, for example.<sup>75</sup> Along the way, Bess built a portrait of herself in the series of houses and objects she co-designed in order to mark her social rise (and serve as a literal foundation for the rising fortunes of her offspring, who continued to advance up the social ladder after her death at nearly ninety years of age).<sup>76</sup> Most scholarly attention has rightfully been paid in this context to the innovative architectural form Bess developed at Hardwick with Smythson and to that home's emphatically gyno-centric plasterwork, as well as to Bess' embroideries.<sup>77</sup> But in the following, I concentrate instead on this one particular table and examine the ways in which its visual language and its form help us to better understand how the relationship between person, place, and property was shifting in this period, when the construction of a "view" of space and place was beginning to

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<sup>74</sup> Recent biographies include Lovell (2006) and Katy Hubbard (2018). More academic perspectives can be found in *Bess of Hardwick: New Perspectives*, ed. by Lisa Hopkins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019) and Alison Wiggins, *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: Language, Materiality and Early Modern Epistolary Culture* (London: Routledge, 2017). For a specifically material culture perspective, see also Santina Levey and Peter Thornton, *Of Household Stuff: the 1601 Inventories of Bess of Hardwick* (London: National Trust, 2001), Lindsay Boynton and Peter Thornton, "The Hardwick Hall Inventory of 1601," *Furniture History* 7 (1971): 1–14 and Peter Thornton, "A Short Commentary on the Hardwick Inventory of 1601," *Furniture History* 7 (1971): 15–40, which includes the inventory (subsequent citations from the inventory will refer to this printing).

<sup>75</sup> See e.g. Lovell, 2018 who foregrounds these familial dramas, whereas Hubbard focuses more on Bess' building activities.

<sup>76</sup> On the gendered dynamic of the architecture at Hardwick New Hall, see Sara L. French, "Hardwick Hall: building a woman's house" in Hopkins ed. *New Perspectives...* (2019), 121–41, Alice T. Friedman "Architecture, Authority, and the Female Gaze: Planning and Representation in the Early Modern Country House." *Assemblage* 18 (1992): 41–61, and White (2005).  
and White (2005).

<sup>77</sup> See Jones, 87–98, Santina Levey, *The Embroideries at Hardwick Hall: A Catalogue* (London: National Trust, 2007), Levey, *An Elizabethan Inheritance: the Hardwick Hall Textiles* (London: National Trust, 1998), and Susan Frye, *Pens and Needles: Women's Textualities in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 116–59.

fundamentally change— while also attending to how the object articulates personal relationships unique to Bess’ own social ascent as a Tudor woman.<sup>78</sup>

This nexus of personal relationships (e.g. marriage) and successful economic management thus opens out onto seeing the Eglantine table, specifically, as a portrait of Bess contoured by economic dimensions, and, more broadly, onto the ways in which tables played a role in the social management of Elizabethan houses. This chapter about one woman’s table, then, is also about how architecture and landscape came to conjoin with a historically specific concept of “viewing,” which implied an overview of land as property. Before proceeding, therefore, a brief note about what it meant in Tudor England to *view*.

### *A Note on “Viewing”*

In the field of art history we speak often of viewing conditions; we talk of the “viewers” of a painting; we speak of a “view” of the landscape from a building; we speak of “a point of view.” In popular parlance we also speak frequently about “viewing”: a sports event, or a TV show (perhaps even of the talk show “The View”). The term, however, was not always this ubiquitous. “The view” actually meant something quite specific in early modern England. A cursory glance at the Oxford English Dictionary entry for “view” reveals traces of this: the word long carried specific associations with legal processes, judgement, and property: for example, a 1415 mention - Wee [masons and carpenters]. beyng *vewers* for the tyme of the seid Cite, haue to these vewes afore written putte our sealles, or in 1460, We schall zeve to them sufficient Eschaunge, by the *vewe* of lawfull men, in my othir londes to a conuenient *valewe*.<sup>79</sup> The “view” in these cases is specifically involved in the process of *looking* in order to assign value in a manner that carries legal currency and *authority*; moreover, as the quote drawn from *A Book of London English* by R. W. Chambers and M. Daunt indicates, this process of looking may well have been associated specifically with a process of building (*Wee masons and carpenters*).

By the sixteenth century, this constellation of law, space, and the physical construction of value seems to have concretized around the figure of the surveyor and the act of surveying; in the

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<sup>78</sup> In early modern England, numerous socio-political developments led to both great pressure and possibilities in the real estate market. With the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII, an enormous amount of land flooded the market. Simultaneously, shifts in the composition of the political elites led to new forms of social mobility, while new economic developments (including bad harvests and the incipient stirrings of proto-capitalist economic impulses led to structural changes in the consumer and agricultural markets, as well as a high degree of inflation. In this volatile situation, land was at a premium, as were maximizing profits from real estate. For land was the only firm basis of generating income, just as it was linked socially to status and dynastic longevity. The pressure on the peerage and upper gentry to present themselves nobly at court led to further financial anxiety, including a notable degree of indebtedness, for which land was the best – and only real – collateral. Hence, landlords desired to maximize profits on rent and resource development, a challenge that technological developments in cartography were able to meet in the long run (if not immediately in the 16<sup>th</sup> century), since new cartographic methods enabled more exact inventories of land holdings, not to mention a new means of claiming ownership of land in court. On land and money in Tudor England see Wrightson (2002), Thirsk (1984), and the *Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967) although Stone’s theories have since been disputed and widely debated. See also Joyce Oldham Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978) for an analysis of seventeenth-century developments of 16<sup>th</sup>-century theories of economic prosperity. In *God speed the Plough: The representation of agrarian England 1500-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Andrew McRae offers a useful and compelling history of economic theory development through the fulcrum of agrarian politics specifically and the figure of the surveyor.

<sup>79</sup> “view, v.”. OED Online. March 2020. Oxford University Press. <https://www-oed-com.libproxy.berkeley.edu/view/Entry/223303?rskey=8VmvPI&result=1#eid> (accessed March 16, 2020).

first English handbook on surveying by John Fitzherbert, *Here Begynneth a right Frutefull mater: and hath to name the boke Surveynge and Improvementes* (1531), the author defines the functions and responsibilities of the surveyor, which were manifold. Key to each of his responsibilities (which included fixing leases, grants, tenures, and so forth) was viewing. Fitzherbert notes that the term surveyor itself derived from the French, for overseer, and that the surveyor ought to “butt” and “bound” all properties by defining their areas. The act of defining these areas – though Fitzherbert provides no instruction for measuring – depended on estimating the size of fields by ascending a high place and “viewing”. Of course, surveyors were not the only people who climbed up hills and towers and looked down—in the early modern era one perhaps thinks most readily of Petrarch’s momentous climb up Mont Ventoux—yet in Tudor England the association between legal legitimation, “viewing” and the parceling out of value to land was connected to the ascent—and the view therefrom—of the surveyors who worked for the English landholding class.<sup>80</sup> If by the mid-seventeenth-century Robert Callis highlighted the difference between viewing and surveying (*There is a diversity between a view and a survey, for by the view one is to take notice only by the eye, but to survey is...by using other ceremonies and circumstances*), he nonetheless conjoined the two activities in a manner that showed how one may well have been indelibly linked with the other.<sup>81</sup>

This conjoining can be understood in terms of the relationship between socio-economic position and viewing as an exclusive privilege: the aesthetic enjoyment of the view appears to have been linked to the construction of a “place” i.e. property belonging to a single owner able to assess value through surveying techniques, which were then put to use in order to build his (or in Bess’s case her) upward position into the social and physical landscape. Tables, in a sense, followed this upward trajectory. The form of the Eglantine table was initially associated, as we will see, with traditional forms of hospitality and a mixed social space on the ground floor. But over the course of the sixteenth-century (and before), tables began to detach themselves from the permeable space of the ground floor and retreat to ever more exclusive social zones located higher in the home, ensuring greater visibility in terms of class distinctions. At the same time, the table can be understood as object that organized social relations between man and wife, parents and children, landowner and community. The table was an object quite literally “between” people, and the relations that it articulated were financial, gendered, and familial, since all of these were interlinked.

With this in mind, this chapter works to unpack the form of Bess’s, “placing” it in her biography, while also investigating how tables appeared in other Tudor marriage and family portraits. Given the table’s metonymic status as a symbol of the home, it makes sense that it frequently appeared in family portraits in ways that allow us to see how family relations were often conspicuously negotiated around its form as a means of visualizing the balance of power between men and woman in a marriage. In these images, the table as an object depicted in the picture and the table *as* a picture conflated as a portrait of a marriage. Since the management of

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<sup>80</sup> On Fitzherbert and the history of English surveying, see F.M.L. Thompson, *Chartered Surveyors: The Growth of a Profession* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1968) and Allie W. Richeson, *English Land measuring to 1800: instruments and practices* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1966). Petrarch’s ascent led later cultural theorists like Jakob Burckhardt and Hans Blumenberg to point to the poet’s ascent as a defining epochal moment, “oscillating” to follow Blumenberg, between the medieval and modern eras. Blumenberg, *Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983), 341.

<sup>81</sup> “view, v.”. OED Online. March 2020. Oxford University Press. <https://www-oed-com.libproxy.berkeley.edu/view/Entry/223303?rskey=8VmvPI&result=1#eid> (accessed March 16, 2020).

household finances structured gender relations in Tudor marriages, the chapter further suggests that we can best understand both the technical and iconographic registers of Bess's Eglantine table when we consider her relationship to accounting: taking control of her finances as a woman was the means – by no means easy – by which she built “herself” and her home, in relation to her husbands, but also distinct from them.

We will thus begin by thinking about how the iconography and materiality of her table articulate shifting notions of Tudor sociability before turning to the symbolic functions of tables in Tudor marriage rituals and portraits. We will then try to combine what we have gleaned with an investigation of Bess' accounting tables, in order to mine more deeply the ways in which her table can be understood as portraying particular aspects of her person specifically. In conclusion, we will return to the idea of the view, and the window in the High Great Chamber, asking why it is that this large table stands in very much the same place today as it did in Bess' time, high above the ground.

## Portrait of a Marriage

### *Distinguishing Details, Tightly Joined*

“I thank you for your baked capon, and chiefest of all for remembering of me,” wrote George Talbot, 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Shrewsbury, from his house at Wingfield to his new wife Bess in June 1568, shortly after their marriage.<sup>82</sup> The fabulously wealthy, widowed, and premier-ranking Earl of the land was traveling to check on his northern estates and had left his new wife at the fashionable Derbyshire mansion she had built with her second husband, Sir William Cavendish, at Chatsworth.<sup>83</sup> Both the Earl and his wife were by now in middle age and Bess was a highly experienced household manager who had kindly seen to her new husband's well-being while he was away by ensuring that his table was well provisioned. The baked capon she sent was a marker of the new familial and household bond they shared; it demonstrated that she remembered him (and thereby performed her Tudor wifely duty in running the house) and also symbolically marked a shared space, a home for which the table stood as a metaphor, supported by her metaphorical legs, as well as her husband's. For his part, the letter “scribbled” quickly on a table or portable desk, marked a kind of reciprocity: what Shrewsbury brought to the metaphorical table was his economic strength.<sup>84</sup> His literal and metaphorical legs were busy surveying (“viewing”) the properties that buttressed their wealth, while she surveyed the money coming in and managed the household, a task expressed by the presumably hearty and plump

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<sup>82</sup> A capon is a cockerel that has been castrated in order to improve the quality of its meat for eating. Earl of Shrewsbury to Bess, 1568, shortly after they were married. Cited in Lovell, 201.

<sup>83</sup> According to Lovell, there was only one Duke in the land at the time, the Duke of Norfolk, and in the next tier down of peers, Shrewsbury stood at the top of the Earl hierarchy. Ibid. Bess' Chatsworth was demolished to make way for the later building that currently stands on the site of Bess' home. Only a hunting tower and parts of the grounds remain from the Elizabethan era. Hubbard provides a useful description of Bess' work on that house. Hubbard (2018), 51-64.

<sup>84</sup> He wrote, “yet thinking your would be desirous to hear form me, scribbled these few lines to let you understand that I was in health, and wished you anights with me.” Ibid, 90. Shrewsbury had terrible handwriting that got increasingly illegible over time, probably due to arthritis and gout. Yet he wrote voluminously, an activity that was certainly painful and no doubt contributed to his irascibility, but also seems to have been a way to blow off steam.



baked capon.<sup>85</sup> Together they wove a matrimonial tissue, a picture — or table as they would then have said in sixteenth-century England — of a shared room and “boorde” (the literal surface of a table), in this case bountifully laid.

Meanwhile back at Chatsworth, it is likely that Bess presided over the newly made the Eglantine table, which the 19<sup>th</sup>-century English illustrator and natural scientist Llewellyn Jewett would term, “one of the most remarkable and curious pieces of inlaid furniture in the midlands — or...in the kingdom.”<sup>86</sup> It was, and is, a striking object. Rather than being laid with actual capons, the Eglantine’s form is remarkably and “curiously” *inlaid* with patterns that commemorated the Shrewsbury marriage in ways that resonate with the social structures of Tudor marriage hinted at above: an interweaving of husband and wife through the economic and physical network of the home.<sup>87</sup> Each aspect of the table speaks to the coming together of man and wife, united in the ambitious joint project of elite Tudor *house-holding*. This is true in terms of the its ornamentation, as we will see subsequently, but it is also true in terms of the object’s structure. Let us begin there and consider various ways in which the table operates as a portrait of a period marriage.

The ambitions of the table’s owners are denoted perhaps most clearly in its considerable size, as previously mentioned (Figs. 2-5). Perhaps the first thing one observes about it is its scale. It is large and it is visibly heavy: its four sturdy legs extend — tapering — downward from the top into the ground where they are anchored by stretchers forming a frame that distributes and stabilizes the object’s considerable weight. This is clearly a table built to last, and also one built to stay in one place; in this sense, it is reminiscent of the hardwood (walnut and ash) tree trunks, which were used to build it and which had taken generations to put down roots and grow before they could be used as timber.<sup>88</sup> While the stretcher frame appears to bind the table’s various parts

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<sup>85</sup> For a general overview of the social and economic roles of women in Tudor England see, for instance, Pearl Hogrefe, *Tudor women: commoners and queens* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1975).

<sup>86</sup> Jewett, 2.

<sup>87</sup> We cannot be sure where the table originally stood, nor who commissioned and produced it. I am suggesting that it stood originally at Chatsworth because in that house, inlay work played a conspicuous role in the interior décor, as we saw in my opening vignette. White (2005) contrasts the emphasis on woodwork at Chatsworth with the dominant textile emphasis in Hardwick furnishings, including wall hangings. In Chatsworth there were 30 rooms paneled- six to the ceiling and some inlaid with alabaster and colored stones. See White (2005), 135 and 143-144. Precisely because of the lack of information relating to its commission and original display, we must rely entirely on the object itself in order to arrive at a speculative analysis of where it could have originally been located. I also am suggesting that Bess commissioned the object since she appears during that period to have purchased a good deal of inlay furniture. Presumably it could have been a wedding gift from a *very* generous friend, or Shrewsbury could have ordered it. As we will see, Tudor marriage gifting customs were more oriented around gifts given by couples during courting than wedding presents in the sense we are familiar with today, that is, given by friends and relations to a couple after the wedding. See section two of this chapter below.

<sup>88</sup> Oak takes at least a century to age before it can be used as quality timber for ships and furniture. On cultivating walnut, see Charles Hulbert-Powell, *The Walnut Tree* (London: Unicorn Press, 2019). As a wood, walnut is known for its hardness and smoothness (it is often used in rifle butts, for instance). In English furniture, walnut became especially popular in the seventeenth century after the restoration. It was not, however, unknown as a material before that. In 1552, the Paget inventories record six walnut stools at Paget Place and twelve walnut stools were made for the Great Chamber at Drayton. The famous long 15<sup>th</sup>-century tables (twenty-seven feet!) at Penshurst were not joined, but massive trestle tables made of elm, not walnut which is much smaller in its span. On medieval through 15<sup>th</sup>-century English furniture see Penelope Eames, *Furniture from England, France, and the Netherlands from the twelfth to the fifteenth century* (London: Furniture History Soc., 1977), here 220–21. Sycamore was also used, particularly if a color is required since it took to staining well; on occasion one finds also beach-wood tables, as well as stone and marble (Alienor de Poitiers notes that in France Charles VIII used a marble table for dining in 1484 (“*le Roy soupa a la Table de Marbre au Palais*”) cited in *Ibid.*, 216. John Fiske provides an excellent concise

together and attach them to the ground with aplomb, it is not so much the frame as the object's mortise and tenon *joints* that lend the table physical integrity and strength - and the joint becomes a fitting structural metaphor in numerous respects for the type of work, and statement, that such tables made in a wealthy Tudor home where their presence marked a family's literal rootedness in the land, the source of their wealth and status.

In Tudor England, this type of table was one of three pieces of furniture that truly mattered in any house of means. The others were the bed and the cupboard. The bed was crucial, of course, because it represented the locus of dynastic generation. It was usually the largest, most expensive, and most ornate piece of furniture in a wealthy home.<sup>89</sup> The cupboard and the table occupied, meanwhile, a similar spot in the traditional English house. Both stood in the Great Hall, the home's principal reception room located on the ground floor. We will return at the close of the chapter to the placement of the Eglantine in Bess' home at Hardwick, but in order to introduce the role of the table in Tudor households, I will here indicate how their placement symbolically and physically affirmed the *lieu* of the home's master; it is important to keep in mind, however, that what I delineate in the following is the normative role of large dining tables in large English country houses and not the role or place that the Eglantine table occupied in Bess's home. Although in the sixteenth-century English manner, home design was changing, in the sixteenth century the hall still preserved an open, double-story, vaulted architectural shape, developed initially so that smoke could funnel high up to the ceiling away from an open fire below without choking the household: the hall's hearth was the literal heart of an English estate; it was where a large household gathered in its entirety (including not just the Lord and his immediate family, but all of his gentleman servants, overseers, stewards, surveyors, assistants, and theoretically laborers on the estate) for meals and entertainment, for warmth, community, and sustenance.

It was also where an estate (or a state, if one were a monarch) made the social hierarchy visible. In the hall, the cupboard and the lord's long table stood on a raised dais at one end of the room for all to see. His social position made itself manifest through this elevation; he was on top. The cupboard displayed his wealth in a direct way: the Tudor cupboard did not hide objects behind doors, but was an open set of shelves that displayed precious metal plate. The more shelves your cupboard had, the wealthier and more important you were, as everyone could see.<sup>90</sup>

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account of the development of early modern English furniture including shifts in fashions (and sources) for different kinds of timber in Fiske, *When Oak was New: English Furniture and Daily Life 1530-1700* (Ipswich, MA: Belmont Press, 2013), especially 53. Luff and Wolsey (1968), cite Francis Bacon's *Naturall Historie* of 1626 where Bacon declares it a "rich man's wood" and the best wood for tables, cupboards, and desks. As Fiske shows, however, after the restoration and into the 18<sup>th</sup>-century, with changes in style, social convention, but also lighting, broader expanses of smooth wood (lit evenly by larger windows) became increasingly popular, as did smaller, more intimate tables (gate leg and drawing tables in particular), which lent themselves well to expensive and attractive smaller, more intimate surfaces of walnut and mahogany vs. the rougher oak favored for large Tudor tables.

<sup>89</sup> On Tudor beds see Sasha Roberts, "Lying among the Classics: Ritual and Motif in Elite Elizabethan and Jacobean Beds." in *Albion's Classicism: The Visual Arts in Britain, 1550-1660*, ed. Lucy Gent (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 327. On beds, cabinets, and tables see also Fiske (2013), Luff and Wolsey (1968), Herbert Cescinsky, *English Furniture from Gothic to Sheraton* (New York: Dover, 1968), and for a brief overview of English furniture styles, see the catalogue edited by Trenchard Cox, *A Short History of English Furniture* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1966).

<sup>90</sup> When Cardinal Wolsey entertained the French ambassadors at Hampton Court in 1527, his biographer George Cavendish observed that there was a cupboard for the time in length of the breadth of the nether end of the same chamber, six desks high, full of gilt plate, very sumptuous and of the newest fashions; and upon the nethermost desk garnished all with plate of clean gold were two great candlesticks of silver and gilt most curiously wrought. The same Ambassadors saw an even larger cupboard at their entertainment with the King at Greenwich, where there was

The table, which the cupboard flanked, was arguably both a more simple and more complex object. It was simple in its form: a flat top astride a set of legs. But it was surprisingly active in the ways in which this simple form marked a *place* in the hall, where it rose from the ground upon the dais. Let's think first a bit about its placement and then more about its physical structure as a juncture of interlocking gazes and social relationships.

The link between place-making and authority at the table becomes exceedingly clear when examining, for example, Henry XVIII's dining furniture, which was recorded in a 1547 inventory of Hampton Court Palace. It included two wainscot (i.e. oak) cupboards, four joined stools, *one table with a green cloth*, two joined forms (table frames), and *one* triangular wainscot stool covered in green cloth.<sup>91</sup> We can tell that these furnishings were intended for the king because of their singularity in the ensemble of hall furnishings. True, there were two cupboards, which were essentially tables topped with shelves to show off precious metal plate. But the doubling only reinforced the monarch's claim to social superiority: he had too much plate for one cupboard. There was, however, only one table draped in green cloth just as there was only one upholstered (green) seat, since Henry was the only one allowed to sit on a comfortable piece of furniture while everyone else needed to stand or sit on a less embellished stool.<sup>92</sup> The other tables in the room, meanwhile, were trestle tables that could be (and were) taken apart after a meal to clear the space in front of the King's table for dancing and other entertainments. These tables were characterized by their impermanence; they could be easily swept out of sight since they (and implicitly the people who used them) were, in a sense, interchangeable.<sup>93</sup> The King's table was the only table that remained because it marked *his* place and staked a claim for the longevity of his presence. It was heavy, probably bulbous (Tudor English people had a marked penchant for bulbous table legs), and certainly authoritative like Henry himself. It did not budge while everyone else and their tables did.<sup>94</sup> That is why Henry's table, like the Shrewsbury Eglantine table, was known in England as a "dormeur" or "dormant" from the French *dormir* (to sleep); it overnighted in one place.<sup>95</sup>

In his *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer writes that the hospitable character of Franklin had precisely this kind of table as well: "his table dormant in the halle always Stood ready covered at

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one "seven stages high and thirteen feet long, set with standing cuppes, bolles, flaggons and great pottles all of fine golde, some garnished with one stone, and some with other stones and pearles." At Hatfield House, in 1556, Elizabeth enjoyed a "cupboard in the halle was of twelve stages, mainlie furnished with garnish of gold and silver vessels and a blanket of seventie dishes, and after a voide of spices and sutleties, with thiertie spice plates, all at the charges of Sir Thomas Pope. Cited in Esther Singleton, *French and English furniture distinctive styles and periods described and illustrated* (New York: McClure, Phillips & Co., 1903), 46. On problems related to identifying different types of cupboards, see Peter Thornton, "Two Problems," *Furniture History* 7 (1971): 61–71. Although their function was to display expensive objects, cupboards themselves could be heavily ornamented and often featured bulbous legs and euphoric carving, or inlay like dormant tables, though they were not generally part of what we could think of as matching sets of dining room furniture: each cupboard, like each table, tended to be unique.

<sup>91</sup> The 1547 Hampton Court inventory, cited in Peter Brears, *Cooking and Dining in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (London: Prospect Books, 2015), 505.

<sup>92</sup> On the other side of the room, the queen's side, stood two more cupboards, but the royal consort was only equipped with a tabletop that rested upon two trestles, just as Henry's side contained two "forms" that could also be dismantled after eating. *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> At the Ducal Palace in Dijon in 1384/5 the Lord's table is described specifically in terms of its fixed status as "in the centre of the room stood a great table fixed to the ground." Eames, 224.

<sup>94</sup> Brears, 505. When a meal was over, gentleman ushers brought water for Henry to wash his fingers, then they removed the table cloths, the table tops perched on trestles, whisked the trestles away and hid it all behind wall hangings so that the room was free for entertaining, with the marked exception of the King's stately table.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Fiske, 106 and Eames 223.

the longer day.”<sup>96</sup> This hints again at place-making, since a table that was permanent, and always ready to be laid out with a bountiful spread of food, testified to a fruitful and enduring connection between a lord and his land. So it was with Henry and Elizabeth after him, and for every person of prestige in Tudor England: to have a robust and *established* table was to have a house that was well stocked, a house that could provide hospitality for the court (or estate) and, in the monarch’s case, the kingdom. A magnificent table meant not only money and power, but also largesse.<sup>97</sup> The plentiful table signified the fruitfulness of the land, well managed by a prudent lord who provided for those under him. It was, in a sense, the structure that connected lord and land most directly: the table was synecdoche for the lord (part for the whole) just as the table, as a metaphor for sustenance, was metonymically connected to the kingdom or the state (the two stood nearby one another in rhetorical proximity). In the hall, this dynamic was embodied, as we have noted, through the trope of elevation: the king looked down over his table and over the social space of the hall, ensuring (ideally) control, security and bounty from his perch above.

At the same time, the position of the table at the raised end of the room ensured a specific kind of visual intersection between lord and underlings. One entered an English sixteenth-century hall from the side (rather than on axis) and turned into the room to face the dais. This meant that upon entering, one’s view focused directly (and dramatically, thanks to the movement of the turn) upon the table standing upon it and, specifically, at the middle of the table where the lord sat in his “high chair”.<sup>98</sup> The table, therefore, stood at a point of intersection that metaphorically and visually locked social ideology into place; it served as a kind of joint that conjoined various social bodies, each occupying an assigned place in the social landscape. Traditionally, it thereby marked the reciprocity of the feudal condition through the orchestration of a visual relationship in which the view from above and the view from below linked in its form.<sup>99</sup> The placing of the table, thus, served to mark authority, but also helped to visually articulate the ways in which an ideal English community ought to assemble, like a social mosaic in which each piece had an assigned role and *place*.

This notion of hospitality based around the amply-provisioned table had a long tradition in England, reaching back to early medieval days.<sup>100</sup> It conjoined social ideology nicely with Christian mores; the late fourteenth-century preacher John Bromyard, for example, noted that providing for all types and conditions of men who came to the home was the “essential duty of the good housekeeper” and that the Lord who upheld this duty was on the righteous path to heaven.<sup>101</sup> In the Tudor period, Philip Sidney would write in *New Arcadia* (1590) of the “law of hospitality” which – to use yet a further author’s definition – meant “a Liberal Entertainment of all sorts of Men, at ones House, whether Neighbours or Strangers, with kindness, especially with

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<sup>96</sup> Cited in Fiske, 106.

<sup>97</sup> On the importance and culture of early modern English hospitality, see Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in early modern England* (London: Clarendon Press, 1990) and McRae op. cit.

<sup>98</sup> On Tudor and Stuart chairs see for example Fiske, 133-145 and Luff and Wolsey, 65-78.

<sup>99</sup> This is why fancy Tudor tables have heavily embellished legs and aprons, because they were meant to appear striking for those facing it from below the dais; sometimes they are only ornamented on three sides, since the back – where the lord sat – did not demand viewing.

<sup>100</sup> It was also a tradition that Tudor Englishmen felt to be particularly English, as the author of the *Institution of a Gentleman* (1555) noted when he observed that it was hospitality that distinguished Englishmen from their “neighbours” the Flemish and the French. Ibid, 7.

<sup>101</sup> See Heal, 3.

Meat, Drink and Lodgings.”<sup>102</sup> A good Christian should keep his home open not only to his kin and social equals, but to any man or woman who comes to his door. Keeping house and keeping hospitality were, as historian Felicity Heal has observed, the same thing; and a great lord demonstrated his wealth and power through the magnanimous treatment of *all* of his neighbors. The open door and open table of the wealthy landowner ensured social continuity: the lord maintained his status at the top of the social hierarchy by ensuring that his proverbial flock was well provisioned and taken care of, a social drama that was staged around his dormant in the space of the Great Hall, which was large and open enough in its form to accommodate a wide range of players (who were also the audience for the ritual drama). The public display of generosity bolstered claims of political and social authority. We will later return to the theme of hospitality and the ideological changes it was undergoing in the sixteenth century, but even as its nature was being debated the general paradigm laid out above still held sway in the 1560s when Bess’s table was fabricated.

The table’s materiality and its construction further affirmed the connections between king and kingdom, lord and land. Throughout the sixteenth century in England lordly and magnificent *dormants* were made primarily from English oak, thanks to its durability, strength, and resilience against cracking and warping- physical qualities that resonated with a sense of the cultivation of land-based resources over an extended period of time.<sup>103</sup> The table’s literal joints were also meant to enhance these qualities; in other words the ways in which tables were put together structurally reinforced the metaphorical qualities that the object aimed to project.<sup>104</sup> The interlocking gazes of the “one” above and those below thus found a metaphor in physical joinery that provided strength for the table as a medium of connection, of “joined” parts whose union was built to last because they were inserted so intimately into one another. Additionally, in terms of their decoration, Tudor tables tended to highlight the ingenuity of the joiners’ and carvers’ skills through the creation of elaborate programs that transformed the table’s limbs into circuits of imaginative, associative figures: human bodies, orbs, and foliage with a myriad of surfaces and facets that all would glisten in the candle light, multiplying magnificence but also appearing to come alive.<sup>105</sup> These surfaces could, at times, cleverly conceal the interlocking joints, enhancing a sense of continuity between seemingly disparate elements, while multiplying a sense of magnificence and visual copiousness that dovetailed well with the table’s representational function as a sign of bounty.

This is the case with the Eglantine table, although its form is relatively subdued compared to earlier Elizabethan woodworking. Its legs do not bulge, but taper in a quite orderly fashion showing off the inlay festoons that extend down the legs’ lengths. The apron is adorned similarly with an orderly Grecian entablature, inlaid with a frieze of triglyphs enclosing a repeating pattern of “circular tablets” that extends around the full rim of the tabletop.<sup>106</sup> The emphasis on frames and controlled, repetitive patterning continues along the lower frame base, whose noticeable

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<sup>102</sup> George Wheler in *The Protestant Monastery* (1690), cited in *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>103</sup> Again, see Fiske, 53 on fashions and changes in types of wood deployed in English furnishings.

<sup>104</sup> Dormant tables were, thus, not made by carpenters, who used hammers and nails. Instead, they were made by *joiners* (often with legs turned on a lathe by turners) who slotted the objects together with mortise and tenon joints that could adjust over time to absorb and accommodate environmental changes. On different woodworking professions and guilds see Fiske, 49-65 and Luff and Wolsey, 11-19.

<sup>105</sup> On themes of liveliness and Tudor ornamentation, see David Evett, *Literature and the Visual Arts in Tudor England* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 125-154.

<sup>106</sup> Jewitt provides the most complete description of the table, of which he also made tracings, which are published in the 1882 article. See Jewitt, 2.

mass isn't downplayed but rather highlighted by the alternating rhythm of circular and rhomboid cartouches painted in distemper both inside and out. The emphasis here, in the table's base, seems clearly to be upon the projection of a framing order, one whose materiality (ash, walnut, and fruit wood inlay) and decorative patterning bespeak a knowledge and appreciation of fashionable Tudor ornamentation, while stepping back somewhat from the copious exuberance of much Tudor carving.

This restraint draws attention to the structural elements of the table, as well as to the inlay work itself, since the relative simplicity encourages the beholder's eye to scan the surface of the wood and see the inlaid details more clearly. The joints that hold the table together are hidden beneath the decorative elements, but the ornamentation itself points to an interest in displaying finely interlocking pieces, as the table's top models in exemplary fashion (Figs. 8-10). The top is comprised of three long separate boards, which are affixed to one another via dove-tailing that the joiner has concealed below cable moulding patterns that run the length of the boards.<sup>107</sup> (Fig. 11) These mouldings feature single, narrow strips along the edges of each board that span the object's ten foot expanse. The strips are encircled by regularly winding, meandering ribbons; while the strips mimetically mark the separation of the boards, the ribbons marks their joining—even though the actual dovetail joints remain invisible. There is a way in which this type of visual rhyming is endemic to inlay work in general. As opposed to marquetry and veneering, in which an extremely thin ornamental layer of wood is laid on top of a structure, inlay work cuts into a surface and makes interlocking pieces part of the structural basis of the object itself; inlay ornamentation inheres directly *in* rather than upon the object.<sup>108</sup> It is like a puzzle. In the case of the Eglantine table, the profusion of inlay therefore can be said in an analytical sense to multiply variety (and cost, determined by the effort and skill of the joiner doing so much detailed inlay work, as well as the materials) while at the same time pointing on multiple registers to the cohesive, stable, massive, *joined* form of the object. It will be important for us, as we proceed, to keep in mind how this particular design repeatedly highlights the qualities of stability and orderly joining, without sacrificing an attention to detail.

It is on the table's top surface that these multiple registers expand upon combined themes of union and variety most clearly. Before thinking about what links the three boards of the tabletop in terms of modes of *viewing*, let us first examine them separately, since while dovetailed together, each of the boards comprising the "table" (as both a picture and a tabletop) presents a distinct range of imagery and mode of mimetic play, though all are rendered in the same materials and vocabulary of inlay work. At the table's center (in the middle of the middle board) is a large and elaborate cartouche framing a typically elliptic Tudor couplet: "THE REDOLENT SMLE/OF AEGLENTYNE/ WE STAGGES EXAVET/TO THE DEVYNE" (i.e. the redolent smell of Eglantine we stags exalt to the divine). Like an *impresa*, or motto associated with a particular person, this couplet presents itself as a riddle – one which the framing elements in the extensive horizontal middle frieze help to elucidate, though only for those already "in the know". The cartouche surrounding the written lines veritably squirms with

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> In "parquetrie" for example, which is more like inlay, various pieces of wood combine to form a pattern, often of various colours and textures, as in Hardwick- these are pieced together and assembled in a thickness of about one inch or more, and then cut into lateral slices. Cesinsky, 79. See also Fiske 63 and Luff and Wolsey, 25 -26. In the latter part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, "sunk" carving also became more popular, especially for strapwork and arabesque patterns because it could break up a surface. This carving could be complemented by inlay (sometimes dubbed "markatre" as in the cupboards, stools, tables, and bedsteads of the Lumley inventory of 1590, Luff and Wolsey, 25). In the Hardwick table the flourishes in carving are noticeably discreet and downplayed.

visual fecundity, bringing together Flemish strapwork, rolling vines, nude female figures, swans, and grotesque creatures into a teeming tumble of symmetrically balanced detail.<sup>109</sup> Frolicking in this mass of information are two stags, encircled by the strapwork with garland of roses (eglantines) around their necks. From the two stags, the strap work sprawls outward into an unfolding set of further frames. To the left of the couplet, these frames coalesce first around a medallion with a stag at its center, which seems to have emancipated itself immediately to the left, where it has exited the frame and now supports, along with a hound (on the *dexter* side), the Shrewsbury arms (recognizable from the “lion rampant” on its left half) combined with the Cavendishes (three roses at right). From there, the frame continues to spread in curving sinews to yet another roundel, this time filled with a hound. At the hound’s left is a female fox, who finds herself in the center of yet another strapwork circle, which frames her though at the same time her hands support the very frame that surrounds her, though this frame is cut in half at the table’s end (implying the potential extension, or continuity, of the frieze). All of these combinations of heraldry, which emancipate themselves only to reconvene in new formations, visually play both with Bess’s marriage to Shrewsbury, but also with her previous marriage to William Cavendish, since her Hardwick family heraldry interweaves with the heraldry of both men. As we will see later on, the marriage with Cavendish enabled Bess’s social rise and was, therefore, eventually the key to her marriage to the Earl, as well as key to the formation of her personal identity. Her third husband’s iconography does not appear at all in the table’s central panel, but the interweaving of Hardwick (her family line) and Cavendish Stags and roses are given equal if not more room in the Eglantine’s central strip than the Cavendish-Talbot (Shrewsbury) union.

That notwithstanding, the central strip works hard to convey a kind of balance between the two families through the semantic games played in a symmetrical fashion with their heraldry. To the right of the central cartouche, therefore, the iconography is reversed. To the right of the central couplet, we find a medallion framing a snake, for example. While its counterpart on the left (a hound) was a sign of the Talbots (the Earl’s family name), the snake represents the Cavendishes (it’s borrowed from the crest of Bess’ second husband Sir William), just as the stags’ heads alone stand for the Cavendishes while the standing stags *engorged* with (eglantine) roses indicate Bess’ own family line (the Hardwicks). The coat of arms at left, thus, reverses the coat of arms at right since we find the stags to the left and the lion to the right. At the far end of the right side of the frieze is a male fox facing outward - recognizable thanks to his exposed genitalia – who balances out the female on the far side of the table – a quite remarkable display of gendered balance.

Under the various cartouches we find, at left, the motto of the Shrewsburys (*prest da complir*: ready to accomplish) and, at right, those of Cavendish: *cavendo tutus* (safety through caution). The ornamentation appears to subtly pick up on the combination of the mottos: if the Talbots are ready for action, they find themselves within a framework of reversals (that which was free is now conjoined, and *vice versa*) that demands close looking and caution for at each turn in the inlay, we discover a point of merger and transition: the freedom of the elements and their diversity is also a frame that positions each element into a relationship of mutually constitutive support (a frame *holder*, for example).

The central motto itself, then, with its stags (who exalt the smell of the eglantine rose) connotes Bess and her family (“we stagers”) who find themselves at the middle of a set of transitional

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<sup>109</sup> Anthony Wells-Cole has shown that the strapwork that conjoins the family crests, which Anthony Wells-Cole derives from Jacob Floris’ *Compertimentorum quod vocant multiplex genus* printed just one or two years earlier in Antwerp.

transactions. In Spenser's *Faerie Queen* (first published in 1590), it is precisely this fragrant eglantine that takes center stage in a passage in which, similarly, the nature of such transitions becomes a point of pleasurable aesthetic confusion. He writes,

Art striving to compayre  
With Nature did an arber grene dispred,  
Framed of wanton Yvie, flowring fayre,  
Through which the fragrant Eglantine did spred  
Her prickling armes, embayled with Roses red,  
Which daintie odours round them threw;  
And all within with flowres was garnished  
That, when mild Zephyrus emongst them blew,  
Did breth out bounteous smels, and painted colours shew.<sup>110</sup>

Like the table's couplet, Spenser speaks elliptically; on one hand, bounty and pleasure threaten to exceed the artificial frame that shapes them, while on the other their fecundity remains dependent upon their framing support. The extraction of meaning from the poet's verses, as from the central frieze of the table, thus becomes analogous to a process of combining bits of disparate information and tying them together by means of establishing a sort of grammar (or frame) from which aesthetic pleasure (in the form of interpretation) can bloom. This frame, however, has thorns (it's "prickling armes") that draw attention to its importance as a means of unification; in order to remain fruitful, a balance must be maintained between a diversity of parts and structural bonds; profusion (of meaning, of information) grows when *managed* with the help of an underlying system that binds difference together.

In the case of the Eglantine table, the interlaced iconography of family crests and arms make clear that this binding system is the institution of marriage, something the Tudor ecclesiastical reformer Miles Coverdale termed a "conjugium, a *joining*, or yoking together like two oxen are coupled under one yoke" highlighting the notion of marriage as a crafted frame (or instrument) that binds disparate parts together in order to make them into a productive ensemble – not unlike the joined wooden frame of the table that enables its inlay work to cohere into a stable support surface.<sup>111</sup> The multiple interweavings detailed above (and the table's tripartite upper plane) thus hint at the reasons' for its making: to mark the triple nuptial alliance between the Talbots and the Cavendishes/Hardwicks that sealed the deal of Bess' and Shrewsbury's marriage in 1567. At the same time, they remind us of the "ideal" marital dynamic we found in Shrewsbury's note to Bess regarding her provision of the baked capon: a well-managed merger of two bodies at the table.

### *Mergers and Acquisitions: A Biographical Interlude*

In order to fully grasp the table's significance, we must take a moment first to return to Bess' biography and consider the nature of Tudor marriages more generally. In 1567 and 1568, not only did Bess marry the Earl, but two sets of their children married as well in the Church of

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<sup>110</sup> Edmond Spenser *The Faerie Queen*. For this and other references to the Eglantine rose see Jewitt, 3.

<sup>111</sup> Coverdale's quote comes from his popularization of Heinrich Bullinger's treatise on matrimony, which was frequently reprinted between 1541 and 1575. Cited David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 297 (emphasis mine).



St. Peter and Paul in Sheffield: Bess' oldest son Henry (17 years old) wed Grace Talbot (at 8 years old, she was Shrewsbury's eldest unmarried daughter from his former marriage) while Gilbert Talbot (14) married Mary Cavendish (12), Bess' second-youngest daughter.<sup>112</sup> The original marriage settlement has since disappeared (and with it the details of Bess' "jointure"), but we can safely assume that Bess had negotiated it on terms favorable to her; after all, on a symbolic register it is the exalting Stags on the Eglantine that occupy the table's center rather than the Talbot lion or hounds. As a means of cementing matrimonial gains (i.e. the melding of her property from her previous three marriages and the earl's), the two sets of children were to marry as well so that the newly-consolidated dynastic inheritance would stay within the now-enlarged family.

This was not terribly unusual in the upper class circles of Tudor England. Shrewsbury's two older children had already double-married into the family of the Earl of Pembroke.<sup>113</sup> Whereas the middling and lower classes tended to wed in their mid-twenties, wealthier Englishmen and women had a keen interest in marrying their children young.<sup>114</sup> This shored up the mutual benefits of merged assets since if both parents of a wealthy child died – not an uncommon phenomenon – their property reverted to the jurisdiction of the Court of Wards in London. There, a designated caretaker ("ward") would then take charge of the orphan's assets (and education) and generally try to use them to his own benefit by arranging marriages to ward's own progeny, thereby siphoning the property into his own family's hands.<sup>115</sup> A very broad yoke of marriage was, therefore, the best means of insuring a strong family base comprised of consolidated assets (the most important of which was income-generating land) would remain the family's hand.<sup>116</sup>

Bess knew this firsthand. Her first marriage to Robert Barlow, when she was 15 and he was 13, was in all likelihood made for this reason. Bess' dying father John bequeathed each of his five daughters "40 marks of good and lawful money of England", which was certainly not a lot.<sup>117</sup> The marriage, thus, must have been intended on the part of the Barlows as a means of shoring up their own property claims, which seemed at risk due to the advanced age of Robert's father. The marriage to Bess would have insured that if his father died, Robert would keep his estate (as a married man) rather than forfeiting it to the care of the Court of Wards. However, it was in fact the sickly Robert who died soon after the wedding, leaving Bess a virgin (child marriages were generally not consummated until the parties reached maturity), but also a widow with rights to a widow's dower (one third of income from her husband's estates). Bess had to fight for years in court in order to obtain her portion. Victory came only in 1553 already after her second marriage, at which point she became the life tenant of: "the third part of the manor of

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<sup>112</sup> Her eldest daughter Frances had already married Sir Henry Pierrepont, as we have seen in our introductory vignette; later, Shrewsbury's son Henry Talbot's daughter Gertrude would marry Robert Pierrepont, the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Kingston-Upon-Hull, who was Frances and Henry's son, adding to the Talbot/Cavendish/Pierrepont familial intermingling.

<sup>113</sup> Hubbard, 89.

<sup>114</sup> Eight years old was still, however, remarkably young and demonstrates how keen Shrewsbury and Bess were to bind their family lines together tightly. On English marriage patterns see Diana O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint: Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), Cressy, and Stone (1977) as well as Stone (1967), 77-93.

<sup>115</sup> See Joel Hurstfield, *The Queen's Wards: Wardship and Marriage under Elizabeth I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958).

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Lovell, 23.

Barley with 80 messuages<sup>118</sup>, 7 cottages, 880 acres of land, 260 acres of meadows, 550 acres of pasture, 320 acres of woods, 400 acres of furze and heath, and £8.10.0d rent with appertenances for sundry properties in the villages of Barley, Barley Lees, Dronfield and Holmfield” all of which were in Derbyshire and provided a modest, but not insubstantial income of ca. £30 a year, nearly as much as the sum her father had left her upon his deathbed.<sup>119</sup> I have listed the details of this first dower since, though modest, the details nonetheless indicate the complexity of the spreads of Tudor landholders’ real estate portfolios. Each small bit generated some kind of an income and thus demanded scrutiny, or “viewing”.

For Bess, in any case, this was just the beginning. In 1547 she married Sir William Cavendish. Cavendish was one of Thomas Cromwell’s most enterprising men who made a career (and a small fortune) out of surveying church lands in preparation for the Dissolution.<sup>120</sup> Cavendish was a career “viewer.”<sup>121</sup> As a middle son from a gentry family in Suffolk, he’d had to make his own way in the world, hence his interest in viewing, assessing, and accruing property—something he pursued avidly and opportunistically, making himself an asset at court with firsthand knowledge about newly available property around the kingdom, while weathering the fall of Wolsey, then Cromwell, and finally the death of Henry VIII. Bess was his third wife; presumably they met in urbane, high-rolling Evangelical circles.<sup>122</sup>

Together, Bess and Cavendish acquired a number of properties, though they were initially richer in connections than in landed assets. In 1549 they purchased Chatsworth in Derbyshire nearby Bess’ birthplace for only £600. They didn’t know it then, but it would be the start of the consolidation of northern properties that culminated for Bess in the triple Cavendish-Talbot marriage. When the political winds blew against the Cavendishes’ protestant friends and the Catholic Princess Mary ascended the throne, the Bess and William made themselves conveniently scarce, hunkering down in the north where Sir William, always the pragmatist, had cleverly amassed holdings (mostly in Derbyshire) throughout the 1550s by selling off properties he had previously acquired closer to London.<sup>123</sup> In this, he was no doubt aided by Bess’ first-hand knowledge of the land.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> “Messuages” means dwellings.

<sup>119</sup> Lovell, 28.

<sup>120</sup> Between 1536 and 1541 Henry VIII dissolved the properties belonging to the Catholic church, appropriating and disposing of the Church’s assets, leading to an unprecedented real estate boom, and the possibility of making quite a fortune for members of Henry’s government. Following Cromwell’s death, Cavendish escaped punishment by association by working for the Crown to inspect English gains made following the Fitzgerald Rebellion in Ireland, where he stayed for thirteen months. His supervisor Sir Anthony St Leger (Deputy of Ireland) praises Cavendish in a letter to Henry VIII noting that Mr. Cavendish took great pains in your said service, as well with continual pains about the said accounts and surveys, as in taking very painful journeys about the same”. Cited in *Ibid*, 44.

<sup>121</sup> Following Cromwell’s death, Cavendish escaped punishment by association by working for the Crown to inspect English gains made following the Fitzgerald Rebellion in Ireland, where he stayed for thirteen months. His supervisor Sir Anthony St Leger (Deputy of Ireland) praises Cavendish in a letter to Henry VIII noting that Mr. Cavendish took great pains in your said service, as well with continual pains about the said accounts and surveys, as in taking very painful journeys about the same”. Cited in *Ibid*, 44.

<sup>122</sup> These included most importantly the Greys, as well as the Zouches, where Bess was in service and where she probably met Robert Barlow. On her time at the Zouches and her marriage to Barlow see Lovell, 18-33 and Hubbard 1-13. On Bess’ marriage to Cavendish see Lovell, 34-51 and Hubbard 14-38.

<sup>123</sup> He had also begun to cultivate favor with Princess Mary some time before, sensing that her brother Edward’s demise was immanent and providing her with thoughtful gifts from time to time. Lovell, 85.

<sup>124</sup> Daniel Defoe would still in the 18<sup>th</sup> century complain about Derbyshire’s unruly landscape, describing it as “a waste and howling wilderness, over which, when strangers travel, they are obliged to take guides, or it would be next to impossible not to lose their way” – for Sir William, Bess was this guide. Cited in Lovell, 76.

Sir William's luck eventually ran out when it was discovered that he had been embezzling money from his government positions, although his dutiful service to Henry VIII seems to have allowed him to escape the confiscation of his assets as well as imprisonment with a simple promise to repay the debt down the line. But since he died soon after this, the debt passed to his widow (along with his properties). Luckily for Bess, her solid social network (and, it would seem, vivacious personality) soon attracted the attention of one of Queen Elizabeth's inner circle with money: Sir William St. Loe, who Bess married in 1559. St. Loe not only repaid the Cavendish debt, but left Bess with a generous array of properties, adding handsomely to those like Chatsworth, which she had acquired via her previous marriages. While we will deal more explicitly with modes of Cavendish consumption later, this account of Bess' marriages has aimed to show that by the time of her wedding with Shrewsbury, Bess had risen to acquire an ample and well-consolidated real-estate empire in Derbyshire and the north; each piece of that portfolio was linked in some way through a complex intertwining of personal relationships that were accounted for, managed, monetized, and leveraged as the basis for an increasingly lofty social position.

These connections and the properties that came with them were part of a growing and increasingly geographically unified mosaic of holdings that rooted Bess and her heirs in the countryside where she had grown up. And Bess was actively involved in ensuring both the profitability and her stronghold over these possessions in order to establish a foundation that she and her Cavendish children could build upon, the heard of which would be in Derbyshire.<sup>125</sup> In examining the Eglantine table, specifically its scale, weight and the technique of parquetry that conjoins a plethora of individual bits and pieces of wood, one must keep in mind that the object itself commemorates a gathering of pieces into a stable frame, or foundation. The object celebrates the ways in which disparate elements solidify, and, as we have seen, Bess had been preoccupied for years with precisely this type of assembly: putting together a base (in her home base) that would prove a solid ground upon which she and her heirs could build. There was, of course, nothing accidental about her accretion of status and stuff: each new purchase, or inheritance, afforded Bess the opportunity to furnish her heirs with the kind of solid asset base, which she herself had not enjoyed as a child. For her new husband, George Talbot, the prospect of adding the combined St. Loe and Cavendish properties to his own vast northern estates must have also been a seductive reason for marrying Bess, especially since he (like Bess) had a very active interest in land "improvements" and generating profit from new "projects" with resources like coal and iron, which could be found in her property as well as his. For the new Countess of Shrewsbury and her husband, the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl, their marriage thus lent weight and added substance to the network of relationships and belongings she had spent decades amassing; from her vantage point at the top of the social ladder—from £40 to countess!—the nodal network of her properties was coalescing into a monumental form, which bring us back to the Eglantine table. This object concretized these networks and holdings, presenting them in the form of the large, shared "dormant" table, whose mass weighted their intertwined armorial signs into the ground, framing and solidifying the diverse bits and pieces of property and familial relations that the marriage had joined.

As a signifier of a hospitable household, the Eglantine table thereby both details the biographies of the dynasties whose union the object commemorates while also proclaiming that both houses will be richer, greater, and more bountiful now that they are joined. From above, the

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<sup>125</sup> She would eventually acquire her childhood home, Hardwick, from her financially irresponsible brother James in 1583, years after her marriage to Shrewsbury.

view upon the table allowed for a playful visual retracing of a union that was not only personal, but also spatial: the network of protagonists was also a kind of map of real estate, a flattened set of symbols emblazoned on a wooden, but also a symbolic ground that they eye could scan in order to set them into a meaningful relationship with one another, a relationship that was more diagrammatic than narrative. Rather than telling a straightforward story, it presented a schema of symbols that could be combined and recombined in flexible sequences and mergers, not unlike a cartographic rendering of space in which icons of houses (or in Tudor days, heraldry) marked homes, just as crosses denoted churches and half-circles indicated mountains. Tudor maps did not aim to show users how to get from a to b, but rather indicated sets of relationships and proximities between families and properties in a larger socio-geographic landscape.<sup>126</sup> (Fig. 7)

To recap the argument that I have been laying out: I have been suggesting that the materiality and the aesthetic of the Eglantine's central panel leads us to consider the ways in which the table presents the Cavendish-Talbot union in terms of a consolidation of property: familial bonding paralleled by an interweaving of economic prospects. This is set within a frame of aesthetic pleasure, hinted at by the reference to the heavenly scent of the Eglantine, and further elaborated upon by the two panels that sandwich the central board with its intricate elaboration of interwoven bonds, as described above. Together, these two framing panels offer two types of interpretive possibilities. The first is quite literal: the representation on the upper board of musical instruments and the representations of inlaid game boards on the lower board present an image of Tudor pleasure, ease, and enjoyment, appropriate to people of the Shrewsbury's social status. They give a picture of what constituted high-status 16<sup>th</sup>-century recreation in England. But when read more analytically, they also articulate the interests announced in the central panel in terms of a simultaneously dynamic of accretion and differentiation as an aesthetic and social principle. As we have seen, Bess's social career was a continuous upward ascent, moving into ever more distinguished and exclusive circles. It thus behooves us to consider the ways in which sociability appears on the wedding table produced on the occasion of the ultimate step of Bess's upward Tudor social mobility: marriage into the peerage to one of the wealthiest and most distinguished men in the land.

#### *"Broken Consorts": A Mosaic of Social Distinction(s)*

Let us begin with the upper panel — the musical part . Here, we discover in the center a booklet of trompe l'oeil sheet music, a psalm that was printed and published in 1562 in London. The music unfurls in the center of the panel, allowing us to discern the psalm's lyrics. While this central sheet of music combines various instrumental parts, we find on the panel numerous other booklets – part books – that correspond to the roles of the various instruments also strewn about (or rather inlaid into) the table. These instruments, both string and wind, are scattered around, rendered in remarkable detail as is the instrumentation, so that we can imagine how the larger body of instruments might harmonize together. This particular type of music, in which various instruments combined to play harmoniously together in an intimate setting, enjoyed great popularity in the Tudor period; it was in the 1560s in particular that psalms like the one

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<sup>126</sup> For a general overview of the functions of Tudor mapping, see P.D.A. Harvey, *Maps in Tudor England* (London: the British Library, 1993). When I go into more detail about the subject of mapping later in this chapter, I will flesh out the bibliography on English cartographic history, which is very substantial.

represented were spreading around the kingdom via printed sheet music.<sup>127</sup> One way of understanding the presence of the musical elements of the table is, thus, simply as a marker of taste: the tables' owners must have been interested in music and up on the latest fashions, as behooved any wealthy Tudor Englishman or woman. Music played a key role in entertainment at Court under both Henry and Elizabeth, and it was considered part of a proper education and also judged important as a means of recreation and enjoyment throughout the early modern period in England, a means of "re-creating" the self to provide a balance from the strain of work.<sup>128</sup>

But music also performed a somewhat more discrete social purpose in early modern England. Namely, it was imbricated in the process of social distinction, which is why it is important to consider the musical component of the Eglantine table more closely than simply acknowledging music as a Tudor upper-crust pleasure. Being musically illiterate was akin to being socially inept in Tudor England's elite social circles. In his music manual *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* (1597), for example, Thomas Morley offered the example of Philomathes to his readers, a young man who goes to supper at friends', but does not know how to read the music being passed around and thereby reveals his lack of education and social grace.<sup>129</sup> His lack of participation weakened the social glue that holds the group together.

Sir Thomas Elyot had also praised music earlier in the century as a form of noble relaxation; the well-bred, he wrote, ought to have interest in music and knowledge about it, though they should not be *too* skilled as musicians, since this would negate the *sprezzatura* with which the wealthy highlighted the gap between themselves and professional musicians whose musical abilities implied a link between know-how and livelihood.<sup>130</sup> Beginning in the 1530s, for instance, viols in particular were becoming popular in gentlemen's educations—Bess's second son William Cavendish was an enthusiastic viol player by 1599. Their appearance on the Eglantine table, thus, would have bolstered the sense of fashionable leisure that the table's musical elements must have been intended to convey.<sup>131</sup> The mimetic veracity of the inlay rendering, moreover, invited the fashionable Tudor viewer to both read the sheet music and imagine how each part would sound on the different instruments.<sup>132</sup> Presumably, a "reader" at the table would, if not already familiar with the Thomas Tallis instrumentation of the represented *Lamentation*, at least have been able to recreate the polyphonic sounds in his or her head. Indeed, part of the object's specific pleasure must have laid in the invitation to reconstruct the silently

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<sup>127</sup> On the instruments depicted on the Eglantine table, see especially Collins. On music and leisure in Tudor England, see Alison Sim, *Pleasures & Pastimes in Tudor England* (Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1999), 99–119.

<sup>128</sup> On Renaissance theories of recreation, see Sims and Alessandro Arcangeli, *Recreation in the Renaissance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>129</sup> Sim, 110.

<sup>130</sup> In *The Courtier*, Baldassare Castiglione intones, "the courtier should turn to music as if it were merely a pastime of his and he is yielding to persuasion, and not in the presence of common people or a large crowd. And although he may know and understand what he is doing, in this also I wish him to dissimulate the care and effort that are necessary for any competent performance and he should let it seem as if he himself thinks nothing of his accomplishment which, because of its excellence, he makes others think very highly of." Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 118.

<sup>131</sup> Warwick A. Edwards, "The Performance of Ensemble Music in Elizabethan England." *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 97 (1970 - 1971): 122.

<sup>132</sup> The inlay itself was executed with both bravura and a considerable jot of *sprezzatura*. Like Spenser's artificial bower, the music of the viol is, when played properly as Castiglione wrote in the *Book of the Courtier* (1561) "very sweete and artificial", i.e. not belabored or forced. Cited in *Ibid*, 120.

depicted “broken consort”<sup>133</sup> by putting the parts together (laying them into one another) mentally: the trompe l’oeil folds in the part books’ pages expose only fragments so that the mind must provide the structure and the glue to assemble the larger soundscape.<sup>134</sup> What one sees are “broken” bits of a song and one’s social and musical knowledge, both of which are linked, will enable these parts to come together into a pleasing and harmonic musical whole. Like the sign system of heraldry that can be combined, according to social and aesthetic rules, on the occasion of a marriage, so too does the table advertise the potentially pleasing combination of musical instruments and notes according to the rules of harmonics. Both sign systems are governed by rules, and both convey a sense of harmonic conviviality as being restricted to a specific set of social players.

Thus the inlay work of the middle panel, which mimetically embodied the gluing together of different social bodies through marriage, found an echo in the upper panel’s rendering of music in terms of social literacy. This literacy, in turn, acted as a social lubricant and a glue, provided each member of the ensemble played their *assigned* role. This resulting harmony would metaphorically amplify the sensual pleasure of “joining” (in various senses) by evoking the “shimmering” effect of the “sweet broken music” for Bess and her guests who thereby acted out not only the “consort” of musical parts, but also certain qualities of the table’s joinery itself.<sup>135</sup> The painted plaster figures of wealthy, musical Tudors of leisure with part books that perch above a decorative frieze of wooden carving in the Great Chamber at Filling Castle in Yorkshire (ca. 1585) found a living analogy in the guests gathered around the Shrewsbury matrimonial table.

Read in this manner, the technique of inlay and the table’s joinery thereby conspired to present a materialization of felicitous sociability, associated with forms of belonging that made themselves manifest through the mastery of various types of literacy (reading music in the upper panel, and reading dynastic symbolism in the central panel). The cohesion of this sociability depended on coterminous mechanisms of distinction, particularly in the case of music since instruments and their various combinations were equated in early modern England with class distinctions. Wind instruments on their own, for example, tended to be looked down upon as uncouth (Robert Peterson’s 1576 translation of della Casa’s *Galateo* states, for instance, that the cornett is unbecoming for men of means “if they be not of that base condition and calling, that they must make it a gaine, & an art to live upon”).<sup>136</sup> But in the correct *combination*, the

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<sup>133</sup> On the term “broken” or “English consort” see *Ibid.* Broken seems to be more of a 17th-century term, referring to a polyphony of different instruments while the Elizabethan term “broken” indicated contrasting long and short notes.

<sup>134</sup> It was common in the English upper classes to learn how to sing just your particular part in a song, for which you would receive a part book (the kind of instrumental music represented on the Eglantine was often transposed, in the mid-sixteenth-century, into vocal ‘consorts’). Thus instead of seeing the whole immediately and then finding your way *with* the others, one was expected to get one’s own part right the first time, often without the guidance of bar lines. This demanded a heightened sense of one’s own ‘place’ in relation to the group. *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>135</sup> Harwood, “It is the shimmering effect of this ‘sweet broken music’ that so delighted audiences then and continues to cast its spell today” Ian Harwood, “[Untitled review of] *Music for Mixed Consort*, edited and reconstructed by Warwick Edwards”. *Early Music* 6, no. 4 (October), 611. Harwood accounts record a great deal of entertaining and although Bess didn’t employ her own musicians she frequently borrowed those employed by friends like the Earl of Rutland. On entertainment at Hardwick see Lovell, 407.

<sup>136</sup> Cited in Edwards, 120. Arbeau speaks of how hautboy and sackbut players for weddings, which could be replaced by bagpipe players and hurdy-gurdies as lower class options, while upper-class dancers are likely to prefer the music of string instruments in private rooms (and shawms and sackbuts, like those that appear on the eglantine tables) for larger public occasions. Sim, 105.

polyphonic integration of string and wind “voices” was thought to produce pleasure, as Francis Bacon observed in 1627 in his *Sylva Sylvarum*:

In that musicke, which we call Broken musicke, or Some Consorts of Instruments are sweeter than others; (a Thing not sufficiently yet observed: ) As the Irish Harpe and Base Viall agree well; the Recorder and Stringed Musick agree well: Organs and the *Voice agree well*; & c. *But the Virginalls and the Lute; Or the Welch-Harpe, and the Irish-Harpe; Or the Voice and Pipes alone, agree not so well.*<sup>137</sup>

In keeping with traditional Tudor social ideology, wherein each class had its particular role to play in maintaining the health of the Commonwealth, distinction in music was important in the sense that it guarded against impropriety and imbalance. The recognition of social distinctions, socially and in harmonics, enabled the social whole to congeal appropriately. In the case of the inlaid table, it was precisely the restraint in carving and the prioritization of a unified surface that enhanced viewers’ capacity to recognize distinct elements and “place” them together. Musical combinations, like marriages, the Eglantine table suggests, thus depend on conjoining elements that cohere well together in order to flourish, like Spenser’s fragrant eglantine rose which can only truly bloom when it adheres to the pre-determined path provided by its man-made arbor.<sup>138</sup> Perhaps the table itself can thus be seen as a metaphor for his “arber grene” with its “painted colours”; the art of contractual agreements that delineate social ‘gathering’ (like an English consort, or a marriage) allow the Eglantine rose (Spenser’s nature) to blossom most fully, an event celebrated at the table itself, the site where one can enjoy its “daintie odours” aware that the “prickling arms” of social decorum are what preserve the rose’s fragrance. Presiding over the table, Bess clearly announced that she had mastered the social skills implied by the metaphor of the concert to such a degree that her home provided a frame (think: the table’s frame as an instrument of social gathering) in which an exquisite collection of select “parts” could harmonize and “shimmer.”

There were many reasons why Elizabethans appreciated harmonic music, surely not least because of the sensual and spiritual pleasures to be derived from its harmonic qualities. Here, however, I have been emphasizing the social nature of music here because I want to draw attention to the ways in which Bess’s Eglantine table subtly orchestrates a specific type of sociability. Thus I have been laying out a means of reading the table in terms of social exclusivity that contrasts with the social openness traditionally associated with the for and place of the dormant table in the English Great Hall. Whereas in the Hall, the lordly table connoted generous hospitality for a larger community, Bess’s *dormant* seems to borrow the this form but convert it to suit a different kind of social gathering, one we might relate more to genteel entertaining than boisterous eating. Indeed, the elaborateness of the tabletop’s inlay suggests that it was meant to be exposed in order to be appreciated, rather than covered with the table cloth and trenchers that would have hidden the *dormant*’s top if it had been used for banqueting. This table, therefore, appears to manifest a certain transitional stage in conceptualizations and

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<sup>137</sup> Bacon in *Sylva Sylvarum*, London, 1627, cited Edwards, 113.

<sup>138</sup> A fabulously wrought late sixteenth-century bass viol’s six strings crafted by instrument maker John Rose and now in the Ashmolean, appear to bring forth sound above the former owner’s coat of arms, not unlike how the coat of arms on the Eglantine table appears to unify, metaphorically and compositionally, the various musical parts. In both cases, ownership, in the guise of family crests literally marking an object, appears as a sign of unity between various elements, like strings and musical roles, or marriages. Rose’s viol also has a human head, like the one depicted on the Eglantine. Fig. 12

performances of English hospitality that were taking place in the latter half of the sixteenth century: it holds onto references to traditional forms of an open display of magnanimity and power, but shifts the social register into a more exclusive key.

The apparent waning of great hospitality was something that that numerous commentators from different walks of life and professions bemoaned in Tudor England. William Harrison's 1576 *Description of England* notes that the noble household with its open door remained much unchanged in the Elizabethan era. Yet a multitude of sermons, etiquette guides, and government policies bewailing the demise of lordly generosity toward all members of an estate, especially the poor, attest to the fact that tradition and change seem to have coexisted.<sup>139</sup> Hospitality came under pressure due to a number of concurrent causes. One came from Humanist discourse. Thomas More's *Utopia* already in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century critiqued the practice of lords retaining large retinues of "idle drone"- like servants, which could lead to the demise of a household unable to maintain such a large household to the ultimate detriment of the community.<sup>140</sup> The growing popularity of Seneca and Cicero in the final decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century further heightened Humanists' (and others) sense that largesse should be reined in favor of moderation. The latter's popular *De Officiis* suggested that gift-giving should be predicated upon a certain form of social calculation: one should give prudently and be conscious of what might come in return. In 1600, William Cornwallis wrote in this vein that one should give only for "love or business".<sup>141</sup>

These critiques meshed well with certain other new social developments. One was the increasing pull of the Court in London (itself the object of much critique, as one can read in the genre of Country House poetry that lavished praise on the wholesome purportedly natural order of the Lord in his country seat). Just as Humanism suggested that man possessed values connected not to his station, but to his accomplishments, so too did Court life present an opportunity to avoid stress by gathering with a more limited number of like-minded, but also socially equal, groups of gentlemen and woman. The anonymous author of *Cyvile and Uncyvile Life*, for example, notes that the advantage of London was that you could dine with friends, rather than "your rude Countrey Gentlemen, or rusticall Neighboures."<sup>142</sup> The praise of gracefulness, concord, and *sprezzatura* that we saw undergirding Elizabethan musical discourse also implied that gentility and refinement were traits that not only needed to be cultivated, but also could be used to separate the refined from the boorish; the civility discourses of Humanists and popular 16<sup>th</sup>-century Italian authors like Castiglione thereby justified a retreat from the open social performance of the Great Hall.

Simultaneously, Protestantism promoted the notion that good works did not lead directly to personal salvation, an idea which influenced ideas about the uses and dispensations of charity. Since being charitable and generous was no longer directly linked to gaining God's mercy, poverty and systems of social welfare were subjected to new, more calculated practical concerns. How could one most effectively, and efficiently, care for the needy on an estate, or in town? The question both encouraged and was spurred by a suspicion (which we will delve into in more depth shortly) that the poor may be faking their neediness. While it was socially useful to support "true" poverty, one must guard against those who would fake neediness in order to reap

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<sup>139</sup> See Heel, 91-140.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 94-98.

<sup>141</sup> Cited in Ibid, 101.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, 104..



economic benefits while living in idleness and indolence.<sup>143</sup> Throughout the century, the Tudor governments would famously pass numerous poor laws, but also attempt to use State mechanisms in order to respond, for example to the disastrous harvests of the 1590s, which produced massive hunger and an unprecedented wave of vagrancy.<sup>144</sup>

Let's us return, however, to the question of the table. Under these conditions, hospitality emerged less as a traditional obligation and more as a personal choice. The unusual, anonymously painted, memorial painting commemorating the life of Sir Henry Unton (1557-1596) includes images of several tables, which speak to the social shifts detailed above. (Fig. 8) Unton's portrait is a large work that depicts the public and private lives of Sir Henry, from his birth to his death.<sup>145</sup> To the center left of the large painting we see a monumental rendering Unton at his writing table, laid out with a green cloth. This part of the portrait dominates the horizontal rectangle as a whole since the figure is obviously much larger than in those scenes gathered around. At his table, Sir Henry appears as a man in control of his thoughts, which he will articulate (in service of both self and state, since he was employed by the government in a variety of capacities) on the blank piece of paper in front of him. His professional status – and his standing at Court – depend on Unton's ability (the portrait suggests), to take control of the table with his mind and words. It is part of who is *is* as a public figure.

If portrait presents the table as an integral part of his portrait as a public figure, the tables to his right (much smaller in scale), show Sir Henry's use of tables in moments of leisure. In a rendering of his home at Wadley that occupies much of the portrait's right half, we find the center of the house occupied by a large dormant table, where Sir Henry and his wife Dorothy Woughton are hosting a number of guests. Because the rendering of Wadley House is not consistent, we cannot tell if the banquet is taking place in the Great Hall, or upstairs in the *parlour*, which was furnished with two tables, a livery cupboard (pictured here decked out with plate behind the dormant), and a velvet chair embroidered with silver and gold, perhaps like the one upon which Sir Henry sits at his writing desk to the left. The staircase would appear to suggest the latter, as would the somewhat exclusive social gathering itself: the two men flanking Henry Unton wear hats, a sign that they are gentleman of an equal rank. Musical performances accompany the merry event: a broken consort plays in a sort of orchestra pit below the diners, though if the musicians had played in the Great Hall, they most likely would have appeared in a mezzanine above the diners known as a minstrels gallery. To the left of the central scene, Sir Henry appears to be enjoying the sort of exclusive company provided by like-minded, and similarly socially positioned friends. Above, he sits again with two gentleman viol players (each wear a hat in the same sign of social parity as at the dormant at right), as well as two boy singers.<sup>146</sup> Below them, Sir Henry sits with three further gentleman, sharing not food or music, but presumably words of the sort that Ben Johnson, in his poem "Inviting a Friend to Supper"

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<sup>143</sup> See Ibid, 122-140.

<sup>144</sup> See Ibid, and bibliographical sources listed in footnote 95 below.

<sup>145</sup> On the Unton portrait, see Roy Strong, "Sir Henry Unton and his Portrait: An Elizabethan Memorial Picture and its History." *Archaeologia* 49 (1965), 53- 76.

<sup>146</sup> As Roy Strong notes, Unton was a music aficionado. Through Christopher Hatton, he had met the Aristotelian musician John Case who dedicated his 1588 *Apologia Musices* to Unton. John Dowland titled a musical piece "Sir Henry Unton's Funeral", which was published in the *Lachrymae* of 1604. See Strong, 69. Unton was also connected to Bess of Hardwick through his friendship with her son-in-law Gilbert Talbot, who was married to her daughter Mary and they seem to have both employed the same musician, a certain Thomas Yonge. See David C. Price, "Gilbert Talbot, Seventh Earl of Shrewsbury: An Elizabethan Courtier" *Music & Letters*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (Apr., 1976), 149.

(1616) provided the true pleasure of entertainment. Friends, who are likeminded, Johnson suggests, have more to gain from sharing thoughts than stuffing themselves with food.<sup>147</sup>

Although Unton is pictured in the image as someone who would dispense alms to the poor (who line the path of his funeral train awaiting donations), the table appears in the memorial portrait in a manner associated with exclusivity: it marks his status as a statesman, as well as a cultivated gentleman who studies and enjoys music in genteel surroundings. In other words, the table appears both as a sign and an instrument of personal and social distinction. It is integral to who he is in Tudor society, or perhaps, to how his widow who commissioned the posthumous work wanted him to be understood by others. And although Sir Henry appears in the image connected to a range of social stations from the nobility to commoners and the poor, at his table we discover that particularly when music is involved, he is a man who entertains genteel and intimate company, even while eating. His place is at a table, with others like him.

Bess of Hardwick did not scrimp on giving alms and tips. Later in her life, she founded several almshouses in Derby, also providing sky-blue livery, adorned with her initials.<sup>148</sup> She tipped well when she traveled, and was not ungenerous with her servants. Yet the Eglantine table suggests a function and an outlook toward sociability that is more Ciceronian (cool and calculated) than the “open table” bedecked with “purple pheasant” and other treats praised by Ben Johnson in his ode to traditional English rural hospitality “To Penshurst” (1616).<sup>149</sup> Bess’s table provides an occasion for entertaining of a certain kind, and intimates that the pleasure of company is greatest among those with shared interests, for which the table provides a base. More so than in the renderings of musical company, however, it is the Eglantines pairing of marriage and gaming that introduces the theme of calculation and hedging one’s bets on future alliances and matches into the object in a suggestive manner, which is classed like music, but also clever and potentially profitable.

Gaming, like music, was an integral part of Tudor leisure.<sup>150</sup> Hence, it seems unsurprising that games and musical instruments would appear seamlessly alongside one another on an elegant table like the Eglantine, whose lower board is outfitted with two string instruments amidst a set of life-size game boards (that could presumably be used) including elaborately ornamented chess, draughts, and backgammon boards, as well as a field for dice and several groups of life-size sets of playing cards. Once again, their presence served as a record of upper-class English pastimes of the late sixteenth century; yet like music, gaming in early modern England was popular among all classes, but was also subject to class distinctions. The Unlawful Games Act of 1541 had proscribed gambling in gaming houses where the keeper of the premises profited from those playing; as this legislation demonstrates, it was not so much gaming as such that appears to have been viewed as a problem, but rather the circumstances in and around which it took place that caused consternation.<sup>151</sup> The large amount of Tudor pamphlet literature inveighing against rogues, vagabonds, coney-catchers (con men), cardsharps, and cheats at dice testifies to the specific social anxieties that came into play in relation to gambling. Namely, in

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<sup>147</sup> Ben Johnson, “Inviting a Friend for Supper” in *The Oxford Book of Seventeenth-Century Verse*, eds. H.J.C. Grierson and G. Bullough (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), 155-156.

<sup>148</sup> Lovell, 260.

<sup>149</sup> <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/50674/to-penshurst>.

<sup>150</sup> On gambling history in England see Nicholas Tosney, “The Playing Card Trade in Early Modern England,” *Historical Research* 84, no. 226 (November 2011): 637–56, as well as Tosney, “Gaming in England” (PhD diss., University of York, 2008) as well as Sim, 157–73, Arcangoli, and Frank Aydelotte *Elizabethan Rogues and Vagabonds* (Oxford: Oxford Historical and Literary Studies, 1913), 103–13.

<sup>151</sup> Tosney (2008), 78-88.

texts like Thomas Harman's famous *A Caveat for Common Cursitors Vulgarly Called Vagabonds* (1566), the ills of gambling are often linked to fears over social slippage: cheats may disguise themselves, dissimulate or lie in order to profit in a dishonest fashion. This roguish behavior was understood as indicating a general social unmooring.<sup>152</sup> For whom did the lower-class vagabond, rogue, or cheat work? If s/he disguised their true nature, how was one to *place* them literally and figuratively? Gambling, overshadowed by a constant threat of trickery, was unsettling in part for the same reason that made the "unsettled" position of the growing numbers landless, or "masterless", poor in early modern England troubling for contemporaries.<sup>153</sup> Where did they belong, socially and geographically?

In a society where place and identity were so inextricably linked, this highly visible lack of clarity was threatening; like cards and dice themselves, the figure of the roguish gambler could have multiple sides and faces instead of a fixed, settled identity. Punishments like public flogging at a whipping post, imprisonment, or the forced return to a point of origin (i.e.

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<sup>152</sup> On the policing and ideology of roguery, vagrancy, and the rise of wage labor in early modern England see Aydoelotte, 3-75, A.L. Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England 1560-1640* (London: Methuen, 1985) and especially (and most recently) Patricia Fumerton, *Unsettled: the Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. Fumerton coins the term "unsettled" to describe the subjectivity (or what can be recovered of the unsettled subject) of the mobile early modern English poor, observing that vagrants, as well as apprentices, youth, the urban as well as the rural poor, and other unmoored subjects had little in common with the type of "self-fashioning" described so famously by Steven Greenblatt. For however constructed the fashioned self that he analyzes was, it maintained a certain stability derived from a rootedness to and empowering "place", "either physical, social, or economic" as Fumerton writes. The unsettled man was, as she notes, no man, or many men, in the sense that precisely because he had no master (to use Beier's term), he worked for many men and escaped both professional classification and geographic fixity. Hence, "the unsettled subject was simultaneously grounded and ungrounded, independent and transient, there and not there. He or she...was an individual multiple "I". Fumerton 51-53. In 1621, John Taylor would wax poetically about the beggar, writing, "A beggar lives here in this vale of sorrow,/And travels here today, and there tomorrow./The next day being neither here, not there: But almost nowhere, and yet everywhere." Cited Fumerton, 56. It was precisely this combination of ubiquity and invisibility, or instability in terms of identity that troubled early modern "settled" subjects. Bess' self-fashioning, by contrast, can be seen as operating precisely in the opposite manner: she inscribed her initials into space as often as possible, in the case of the Eglantine table, the object literally weighted *her* into the ground in a manner that precluded mobility. Many factors, of course, came together to produce the growing number of "unsettled" poor in Elizabethan England, including death (of parents and kin, for instance), rising rents and inflation, economic depression, the transformation of copyhold tenures to leases, property disputes, low wages, disease, hunger, new forms of employment, etc. See Beier and Fumerton, 3-46. It is notable that in Harman's tract, he turns his attention to the "Counterfeit Crank, a certain Nicholas Jennings (aka Nicholas Blount) who presents a social "problem" because he adopts multiple identities and disguises himself as one of the vagrant poor in order to trick people into giving him alms. In Harman's text, this particular example serves as a means of seeding doubt as to the authenticity of the poor writ large. Jennings may have been exposed as a "Crank" but how was one, then, to trust any of the poor? When Jennings' "counterfeiting" comes to light, it is a home, with a *joined table and cupboard*, which indicate that he, indeed, does have both a *place* and money: Jennings is discovered to be "dwelling in Master Hill's rents, having a pretty house, well stuffed, with a fair joint-table, and a fair cupboard garnished with pewter, having an old ancient woman to his wife." Thomas Harman, *A Caveat for Common Cursitors, Vulgarly Called Vagabones* (London: Wyllyam Gryffith, 1568), 299 cited in Fumerton, 41.

<sup>153</sup> A text posted by the mayor of London onto a public pillory in 1571 draws attention to the conflation of gambling and "unsettled"/unsettling labor (or the poor in general): "theist owe personnes here present with diverse other there Complices and confederates yet not apprehended, have bynne Cointis Cosiners and Deyeyvers of the Quenes Maiesties liege people, beinge simple, with false cardes and fale play at the same..." cited in Aydelotte, 112. The complices and confederates could not be apprehended precisely because they were not settled. Presumably, they may well have "disguised" themselves to escape the law, assuming a new guise in order to cheat more people. Unfixed in their location, they were also socially threatening because they had no honest and discernible profession. They were two-sided, or even multi-sided in their subjectivity (following Fumerton) and in their self-presentation.

deportation from one community to another) can be understood as attempts to *root* the unsettled by tying them to a location and thereby making them socially legible — it was precisely the quality of potential un-rootedness that made gambling and vagrancy natural bedfellows in the contemporary imagination. Fig. 13 Bridewells were full of inmates who were accused either of unlawful gaming, or an unwillingness to serve a master (like John Devyke, “a picking 'a picking naughty boy that will tarry in service with no man') *or* – very commonly – a combination of both.<sup>154</sup> In 1559, for example, a certain Thomas Grey who was “whipped and set to work at the mill in Bridewell as 'a comon player at dyse and inveglyng of other mens servauntes to use that unlawful game to the consumpcion of their masters goodes'.”<sup>155</sup> Indeed, stocking and pillorying tended to give way under Elizabeth to whipping and branding, increasingly physically brutal punishments that combined “placement” in the sense of grounding with the production of what contemporaries hoped would be indelible marks indicating roguish character.<sup>156</sup> For many, these efforts to label and locate socially displaced people was not enough; forced employment, it was commonly thought, was the only cure for the type of laziness that characterized (and conceptually conflated) the vagabond and the gambler, both of whom would “rather *hazard* their lives than work.”<sup>157</sup> Vagrancy, roguishness, and gambling thereby, as A.L. Beier observes, came to constitute linked “crimes of status... offenders were arrested not because of their actions, but because of their position in society. Their status was a criminal one, because it was at odds with the established order.”<sup>158</sup>

For the upper classes, however, gambling was not necessarily thought to contribute to social woes. In “moderation or measure” play was considered to be vitally refreshing.<sup>159</sup> This included gaming, although of course it remained condemned by strict moralists like Philip Stubbes who fulminated that dice, cards, tables, bowls, or tennis “be no Sabaothline exercyses for any Christian man to follow any day at all, much lesse upon the Sabaoth daye.”<sup>160</sup> Yet even if gambling could lead to covetousness for “filthy lucre”, the very rich had distinct a moral advantage over the poor: because their wealth and identities were linked directly to landed property, gaming did not represent an *untethering* of person, place, and position within the social order. After all, real estate also was the best collateral—it was better even than cash, since in a period of wild fluctuations in inflation, land was the most consistently valuable asset for the wealthy, and one they could “bank” upon in gaming, as in other practices of conspicuous consumption.<sup>161</sup>

This did not mean that the wealthy were thought to be immune to greed and duplicity. In John Harrington’s 1532 treatise on play, he observes that the Court, where primero and dice were much in fashion, was riddled with deceit.<sup>162</sup> However, the players in upper class circles were, in a sense, known quantities; and just as music was social glue, so too was gambling *de riguer* as a

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<sup>154</sup> Cited in Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 207.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> “The criminal through the gristle of his right ear, the latter to serve for identification as well as punishment.” Arthur F. Kinney, introduction to *Rogues, vagabonds, & sturdy beggars: a new gallery of Tudor and early Stuart rogue literature exposing the lives, times, and cozening tricks of the Elizabethan underworld* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 18.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> Beier, xxii.

<sup>159</sup> Tosney (2008), 198.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>161</sup> Stone (1967), 249-267.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

means of marking identity and belonging in genteel company.<sup>163</sup> As in a musical “consort”, a shared game implied knowledge of a common set of rules that integrated different players into a larger group. That is what links the music, games, inlay work and marriage themes in this table: each is like a puzzle assembled according to certain rules which conjoin diverse units (bodies, gaming pieces, coats of arms, and musical harmonies) into a whole. The rules are like Spencer’s arbor, which allows the eglantine rose to flourish bountifully. At the same time, in each of these instances, the rules can be mastered best by those who are at the top of the social ladder. They can assemble bits and pieces, contrasting them, contesting relationships, and moving them around more into new configurations because they have the means to do so, as well as the knowledge. The latter implies as well not only that the wealthy have an overview because their status is above others (like the Lord at his dormant in the Great Hall), but also that they possess knowledge that others do not, or rather, a specific type of knowledge that they share with members of their class, with whom they assemble at the table.

Wealthy Tudors also had, in some ways, the most to gain from social activities like gaming. For a young, upwardly mobile couple living in London in the 1550s like Bess and William Cavendish, gambling enabled them to integrate socially and “keep up” with the social circles they aspired to be part of. Their accounting records from this time show that indeed both were regular gamblers; though they tended not to live above their means, the fact that Sir William dropped £2 in a single evening indicates the social pressures they must have been under trying to keep up in elite social circle. To give a sense of comparison, Bess and William paid less than twice as much (£3.16s.8d.) in rent a year for their house on Newgate Street.<sup>164</sup> And when Shrewsbury wrote her decades later from Hampton Court, he wistfully observed that “it is every night so late before I go to my bed being at play in the privy chamber at primero, where I have lost almost a hundred pounds and lacked by sleep.”<sup>165</sup>

The games presented on the Eglantine table thus turned the tables on the prevailing discourse of roguery, suggesting that gaming actually *placed* those invited to the well-laid table because their social position was already firmly grounded in land and money - and deeply connected to the tangled webs of social and familial relationships so lavishly depicted in the Eglantine’s central frieze. The gaming table was, therefore, not only a site of potential risk but also a means of establishing and stabilizing social bonds. In the Hardwick New Hall inventories of 1601, for example, several other examples of smaller inlaid tables incorporating geometric and arabesque ornamentations were included. In one of those tables the inlay depicted four playing cards located at each corner of the tabletop that were placed around the house’s entertaining spaces, as well as mentions of board games (often themselves listed as tables).<sup>166</sup>

On the Eglantine table, the playing cards are laid out in a manner that suggests similar sorts of relationships as the musical party and intertwining armorials in the panels above. Specifically, the spreads of cards suggest ways in which groups and figures harmonize; on the left we see four aces laid out in a line (to the top of a guitar), and then a set of four “5’s” and four “10s”; farther to the right “3’s” have found one another, while in the right hand corner four mixed and discarded hands seem to have been trumped by an ace that lies in the middle. One might speculate that the two threes could speak to the triple alliance, as could the three sets of four cards at left. On the right, where the winning ace takes the game, someone has played their

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<sup>163</sup> As Stone highlights, debts mattered, ultimately, less than maintaining status. Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Lovell, 57.

<sup>165</sup> Hubbard, 90.

<sup>166</sup> Hardwick inventory number: HHE/F/326, See White, 146.

cards cleverly. In Bess' case, we might say that the marriages with the Talbots were akin to this winning coup; they cemented her remarkable social rise and solidified her position (and that of her children), as one half (and two legs) of one of the wealthiest (four-legged) power couples in the land. This joined unit's shared base frame of properties and investments promised to become a playing field for the expanded family's future success.<sup>167</sup>

Our analysis of the Eglantine table has, thus, revealed multiple aesthetic patterns, all of which speak to various kinds of union: the musical party, the gaming party, and marriage. In each case, processes of social combinations – and social distinction – come into play, and the technique of inlay itself appears to serve as a medium that implies the success of the specific social combinations that motivated the table's production thanks to the material's expense and its physical scale and heft. The Eglantine, thus, can be said to be part of a representational process of place-making that depends in numerous respects on a conflation of modes of combinatory processes and distinction, both of which find themselves interlinked through the object's integrated registers of visual and social logic. Distinction, as we have seen, is to be found in two primary ways. On the one hand, the table represents leisure activities in which pleasure is tied to social exclusivity through the frame of harmonic group action (music and gaming). On the other hand, distinction also becomes literalized as an active visual process thanks to the technique of inlay itself: the subordination of excessive carving to *parquetrie* means that the object demands the inspection and appreciation of small details put together into a larger whole. At the same time, the support structure and expanse of the table's top becomes a support structure that celebrates the possibility of making matches in general; the table advocates for the way that playing cards and social alliances, or musical harmonies, can be mobilized in order to fall into and adhere in their "proper" places. The viewer is asked to identify and complete parts of songs (to be played finely wrought instruments), find patterns in cards (or create new patterns on useable game boards), solve visual and textual riddles, and also discern the latest fashions in ornamentation in ways that activate viewing as a process of scanning and assessing information in order to join it successfully with complementary elements.

This type of combinatory viewing is what the English literary scholar David Evett has analyzed as the Tudor penchant for "paratactic" aesthetic forms. Parataxis is an expressive, rhetorical mode in which holes, or gaps, are deliberately left in order to diffuse and complicate meaning.<sup>168</sup> The paratactic text, or image, is, then, one that features juxtapositions, which are intended to dispense with an easily discernable aesthetic unity—as Evett writes: "images are

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<sup>167</sup> In some ways Bess' gamble with her children's marriages paid off, while in others it was a miserable failure. Grace and Henry Cavendish were desperately unhappy together and spent their days in relative penury at Tutbury Castle, where Shrewsbury and Bess had kept Mary Queen of Scots under guard, to Mary's considerable duress since the building was dark, dank, and stunk of latrines. Henry fathered numerous illegitimate children, but no heir. He had to sell off numerous pieces of property to his brothers, which is how Charles Cavendish ended up acquiring Bolsover. Mary Cavendish and Gilbert Talbot were a happier pair, though they had what might be best described as a rocky relationship with Bess, who herself was bitterly estranged from Shrewsbury for most of their marriage. In the late 1560s, however, the horizon appeared rosy. William Cavendish, Bess' middle son, and her youngest, Charles, made out best, ultimately siring generations of earls and dukes though they themselves had not married into the peerage. If one values status and legacy over psychological well-being (as any Tudor peer would have), then Bess made out fantastically well. Viewed from another perspective, things were fraught. See Stone (1967), 91-92 on the Cavendishes in context with other upwardly mobile Peerage families.

<sup>168</sup> David Evett, *Literature and the Visual Arts in Tudor England* (Athens & London: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 125-154. On parataxis as a rhetorical strategy see also Theodor W. Adorno, Parataxis in *Notes to Literature*, Vol. 2, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 376-414.

linked or juxtaposed in ways that violate ordinary spatial and situational logic.”<sup>169</sup> This manner of presenting information disperses an accumulation of information and asks the reader, or viewer, to collage it together in order to make a potentially open ended diagrammatic structure, or map that can move in different directions simultaneously, depending on how one links nodal points of information together. In this way, the paratactic object highlights the artifice of combining elements and at the same time infuses individual bits and pieces with a protean nature: each one manifests a potential for growth; elements can grow in unpredictable ways (a frame can become a snake that can bite a swan sitting on a stag who was a Cavendish, but is also a Talbot, etc.). In the Tudor paratactic world, the apparent chaos of these signs—what Evett articulates as a manifestation of a politically and socially unpredictable world—belies an in-built mechanism of control. For its ambiguities, while perhaps unsettling, also offer the initiated (i.e. the culturally literate) the potential to seize disparate elements and create value from their copious diffusion. In the case of the Eglantine table, the object’s weight and size work against anything remotely “unsettled”: they anchor Bess’ identity into space, into her home and the land around it.

At the same time, the very scale and span over which the inlay work spreads demands that Bess’ guests mobilize themselves in order to take in the information the table presents. She (in the guise of the table) thus subtly force the beholder to become a mobile *viewer*, building a diagram through the information laid out by moving and assessing individual pieces that cannot be seen all at once (ten feet, spread horizontally, is too elongated to apprehend at a single glance). While the traditional dormant table operated according to a logic of centralization (in the Hall) as a means of consolidating traditionally masculine household authority, Bess’s dormant variation seems to prioritize a different mode of claiming authority, which indicates a transition in the life of the English aristocratic table as a social object. In her table, centralization begins to give way to a logic of dissemination. The centralizing impulse begins to sink beneath a surface constituted by a plethora of scattered parts that must be gathered and conjoined by an agile and mobile mind and eye of a specific class.

Unlike a sixteenth-century Italianate perspective painting which imposes a single point of view upon the viewer, the paratactic Tudor object privileges the viewer who is able to make the most out of a series of *unexpected* transitions, open to multiple potential endings and possibilities, like marriage(s) itself, which is also a moment of dramatic social transition. Who can make the most of the cards laid on the table? The Elizabethan paratactic subject is sunken into this object, disembodied and hidden, protected behind a façade—in fact, most of the favored Tudor pictorial media like inlay, appliqué, embroidery, plasterwork highlight surface rather than depth, perhaps as a means of shielding elite subjects frequently under pressure of political retribution, something Bess was familiar with: by the 1560s she’d seen numerous friends, including Jane Grey, lose their position and their heads in the wake of political tumult.<sup>170</sup> This

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid, 137.

<sup>170</sup> In *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), Patricia Fumerton locates the Tudor and Jacobean interest in ostentatious displays of surface in terms of social instability. In Tudor art and architecture, marginal aspects tend to be highlighted as opposed to the presumable center, or core: for instance, banqueting towers at the upper edge of a house, or bejeweled cases for miniatures: the frame, or the encasement and the edge is prioritized and put on display for all to see, while the center is hidden tucked away. In her argument (following in some sense Stone’s theses about social mobility), during the transitional gaps of the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century in England, the nature of the English aristocratic self was politically threatened due to new forms of social mobility; in Fumerton’s words, it became “especially problematic in ways that at last embraced other classes as well. Historical transition brought about social, political, economic,

subject thus coalesces at edges, limits, borders, and similar points of passage. These liminal moments, as we have seen, constitute the principal aesthetic tropes of the Eglantine table, though the object also gives special weight to a sense control, thanks its pronounced frame and the way in which the lack of exuberant carving asks the beholder to closely attend to each masterfully inlaid element.<sup>171</sup> Moreover, its stasis (its “dormancy”) asserts Bess’ control of the particular *ground* on and for which the table stands; this transforms the ground from space to “place” in de Certeau’s sense since it contrasts its stasis (and with it, its owners’) with the ways in which it makes other beholders into mobile “viewers.” In these ways the Eglantine table registers transitions (or frames them) as winningly mastered on the part of its owners through both metaphorical and physical joinery. Here, it says, is a place in which a frame has been built where transitions – foremost among them marriage – “dovetail” well with one another and thus strengthen rather than weaken a new whole, which comes together visually most fully when one has an overview of its distinct parts.<sup>172</sup>

The table, thus, not only presents an image of Tudor “tastefulness” (the most genteel pastimes, the latest designs), but turns the process of first distinguishing and then assembling

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and other displacements of aristocratic ‘place’ that destabilized the self in its delicate balance between private and public presence and fomented the need for a renegotiation of the meaning of selfhood. The aristocratic self needed to be reinvented to claim a new position able to overcome marginality by making marginality one with cultural centrality. . . . The Elizabethan and Jacobean aristocracy occupied the uneasy interface between the historical and the aesthetic, the central and the peripheral, the unified and the fragmentary. They lived the practice of social ornament.” Fumerton (1991), 26. This analysis can be usefully thought of in relation to Bess and her table, for the object made its surface analogous to her social ambitions (distinction in terms of rising to the top of the social pile), but in a sense, replaced her body with a Spenser-like artful (“artificial”) arbor, or frame. Present, but also absent when the object stands in for her, Bess finds herself replaced by protean, paratactic designs that are aesthetic, but also social (and political) in their nature. A couple of decades after her marriage to Shrewsbury, the bitter 6<sup>th</sup> Earl would write to her acridly, “I have sene throwlie into your devices and desires”, highlighting how the ornamental façade is not only a puzzle-like “device” in the sense of the witty riddle so beloved by Elizabethans, but also a means of attaining that which one (in this case Bess) desired but kept hidden (for Shrewsbury, this desire was one he construed as being for money he thought was rightfully his, as we will later see).

<sup>171</sup> As Stephen Collins notes that the frame had a political meaning when employed rhetorically in early modern England. For example, Sir Walter Raleigh stated in his *Maxims of State* that a state is a ‘frame’, or ‘set order’ of a commonwealth; Collins observes “it should be noted that ‘Frame’ a term used often by political theorists during these years, should be understood here to connote definition, boundary, and restraint, as in a picture frame, as well as to denote in its verbal form, creating, shaping, or construction, as in framing a constitution. Such a broad definition expressed the inherent ambiguity that natural liberty and man’s power and creativity caused the new political theorists. Collins, *From Divine Cosmos to Sovereign State: An Intellectual History of Consciousness and the Idea of Order in Renaissance England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 33.

<sup>172</sup> The seventeenth-century Jesuit Daniello Bartoli actually compared intarsia to emblems, indicating (as does the Eglantine table), that instarsia, or marquetry’s specific pleasure was puzzling pieces together that shuttled visually between revealing and concealing information. Barloli wrote, “Is not the source of wonder, and therefore of delight in such works, the fact that one sees one thing used to express another? the deception being all the more innocent in that in the whole composition of a false thing there is yet no one element which is not true. The same happens when we use anything taken from history, from fables, from nature and art, to represent something in the moral order which it is not.” Daniello Bartoli, *De’ simboli trasportati al morale* (1677), cited in Mario Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery*, 2d ed. (London, 1964), 19. One might hazard a hypothesis that pleasure emerged here because the “unsettledness” of the instarsia sign was compensated by a certainty that the self, or the mind, was settled. In other words, one could better enjoy games of deception, or illusion (including gambling) if one had a solid foundation to fall back upon. On German instarsia and its relationship to perspective (and the games that marquetry plays with perspectival logic), see Christopher S. Wood, “The Perspective Treatise in Ruins: Lorenz Stöer, “Geometria Et Perspectiva”, 1567.” *Studies in the History of Art* 59 (2003), 234-57.



disparate parts into an aesthetic project of *distinction*. This project rewards those who—based on their cultural capital—are able to recognize both the meanings of the parts and also appreciate the enhanced value they have as a conjoined whole. The interlocking gazes that we spoke of in relation to the visual presentation of the dormant table in the English hall thus finds an echo in the techniques (social and aesthetic) at play in the Eglantine inlay. The Shrewsburies/Cavendishes have the overview (their arms, after all, are emblazoned over the table's center) and their guests are invited to the table as interlocutors who can decipher the table's meaning and discern its social and material value, if, that is, they have the correct tools and attend to detail. I address a further aspect of the table in terms of social distinction later when I discuss the placement of this table in Bess' home, but for now let it simply be mentioned in passing that the table's location outside of and *above* the hall (in the High Great Chamber) is also a key element of socio-aesthetic distinction associated with an elevated point of view. Before turning my attention to that placement, though, I want to turn our attention back to Bess. The rhetoric of the table is, as we have seen, one predicated upon a kind of balanced unity. In the Great Hall, the dormant's unifying task was to serve as a material and visual focal point for the entirety of a landed estate, ordered in a stable and equilibrium around the body of the Lord. Bess's dormant, however, transposed the *domant* into an instrument that staged elite sociability by choreographing a "consort" of bodies in a different, more rarified manner, while still referencing the object's traditional function. At the same time, her long table marriage at its center. If traditionally the dormant table was presided over by the Lord in the single High Chair on his dais, on this table marriage is articulated and materialized as a union between husband and wife, as well as two family lineages: both man and woman provide equally important legs (the table has four). Their parity is what maintains the table's balance. Yet Tudor marriages were often characterized by a gendered imbalance. In what follows, therefore, we will attend to the ways in which this object deals with marriage iconography in a manner that allows us to see the Eglantine as both a marriage portrait *and* as a portrait of Bess as a married, but *self-made* Tudor woman.

## A Fine Balance

### *On Fairing and Handfasting*

It is with this notion of the self-made Tudor woman in mind, that I want to draw our attention back to the marriage alliances discussed above and to push that one step further to consider the table's relationship to the overview as a means of accounting for details that come together to form a portrait of its owner(s). The table was indeed a common transactional element in Tudor marriage rituals — and the Eglantine was not a unique object when it came to conflating matrimony and the unique form (and qualities) of the table as a kind of nuptial commemoration. Made in 1569, the Brome table, now in the Burrell Collection in Glasgow, bears remarkable similarities to the Shrewburys'. (Figs. 14-16) In this other piece of inlay furniture, the central, strapwork cartouche explicitly names a marriage, with the date in the center flanked by the initials of the marrying families (the Bromes and the Crossleys).<sup>173</sup> What was it about tables that would have made them desirable as a commemoration of late 16<sup>th</sup>-century high status marriage? Thus far, I have focused most closely on the Eglantine's

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<sup>173</sup> <http://collections.glasgowmuseums.com/mwebcgi/mweb?request=record:id=33957:type=101#>, last accessed December 3, 2020.

deployment of inlay (something it shares with the Brome) as an aesthetic strategy that communicated certain social desires, but let us return for a moment to the anecdote about Shrewsbury's baked capon to think again more about the table as a plank supported by sets of multiple legs (in the case of the Eglantine two sets of legs: Shrewsbury's and Bess'). These four legs create a balance, as each hold up one end of the weighty object. They become the means by which a span of material is shared and, in as much as they determine a *place* associated with a particular coupling, their *balance* is metaphorically necessary to maintain a household. It is part of a shared economy and an economy of sharing: husband and wife share a household and each plays a role in maintaining that household through a gendered division of shared labor. An English proverb about marriage from the period announced, "Matching in marriage must be with equality" while another aphorism announced "Equals to equals, good to good."<sup>174</sup>

Were tables like the Eglantine and the Brome gifts? Lacking any information about the commissions of either the Brome or the Eglantine, we cannot be sure, but, as we shall see, gifts played a specific role in early modern English wedding customs. Elizabethan wedding gifts were not only presents for the newly married couple, as we think of wedding presents today, but more often traded between the marrying parties themselves, as "tokens" whose materiality bore witness to a shared promise.<sup>175</sup> Given that the Eglantine's elaborate inlay patterning matched the decorating schemes in Bess' home at Chatsworth, where thirty rooms were paneled (six to the ceiling and some inlaid with alabaster and colored stone, including the high great chamber, which was wainscoted "verie fayre" with "Coulored woodes markentrie" and contained eleven inlaid stools and an inlaid table as we've already noted<sup>176</sup>), it is tempting to think that she had the table made as a gift to herself, and/or her new husband as such a token of their pledge to a future life together. As we have seen, marriage in sixteenth-century England was often conceived in terms that were reminiscent both of land and of tables like a "yoking" or a "joining" that glued two parties bound into one flesh; the table could stand, in this regard, metaphorically for a shared household, or piece of land, whose fruits could (and should) land upon the table's top.<sup>177</sup>

This resonates with what historian David Cressy has emphasized in his analysis of early modern English wedlock in terms of marriage being both an event and a condition; there was the first wedding event itself, which then lead to a new status of autonomy and independence, new social and legal privileges, and a new social role in a community.<sup>178</sup> In the event of marriage tables played important ritual roles during courting, the wedding, and celebrating the marriage. In terms of marriage as new social condition, the table served as the symbolic basis for traditional hospitality. If the Eglantine was then a marriage object (a "token") its structure and symbolic meaning may well have resonated with a larger culture of giving and sharing that took place around marriage in order to mark both a shared sense of responsibility (if not affection) by man and wife as well as a desire to stage the autonomy of one's home in terms of economic and social balance. As we will see in the following, tables like the Eglantine as well as tables in English family portraits of the 16<sup>th</sup> century thus appear as focal points around and through which the gender dynamics of a marriage could be articulated.

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<sup>174</sup> Cressy, 255.

<sup>175</sup> On marriage gifting customs in early modern England see Cressy, O'Hara, and Peter Rushton, "The Testament of Gifts: Marriage Tokens and Disputed Contracts in North-East England, 1560-1630," *Folk Life* 24:1 (1985), 25-31 and on gloves as gifts specifically, Peter Stallybrass, and Ann Rosalind Jones, "Fetishizing the Glove in Renaissance Europe" in *Critical Inquiry* 28 (2001), 114-132.

<sup>176</sup> White, 143.

<sup>177</sup> Cressy, 297

<sup>178</sup> Cressy, 287.

By all accounts, Tudor marriage was a social, but also a specifically economic “drama”.<sup>179</sup> The negotiation of a wedded union necessitated, first and foremost, a financial and contractual agreement before it could be consummated.<sup>180</sup> This included questions that depended on the social class of the courtiers: what would dowry, jointure, portions be? What could both parties hope to gain? In this context, gifts, in the words of historian Diana O’Hara, “sought to *transact* all kinds of relations by means of encoded gestures and symbolic objects.”<sup>181</sup> They were known as “fairings”, implying a brokering of a balanced, or fair deal between the marriage parties and they tended to incorporate social and economic aspects as elements of a shared bond to come, which needed to balance the expectations and accounts of the two sides. Generally speaking, fairing functioned as follows: men could give women a gift as a token of their intentions, and women did not need to reciprocate in kind, although when women gave a man a gift, there was an expectation for an equal material response. Because the giving of such tokens depended upon social and cultural circumstances, there was no standard list of items associated with specific meanings *and* because token-giving was asymmetrical in respect to gender (since gifts could, for instance, be thrust into a woman’s cleavage, or her hand, or pocket without necessarily conditioning a response), there was a considerable degree of ambiguity in interpreting the meanings and authority of tokens exchanged.<sup>182</sup> These kinds of bawdy antics were, of course, not part of elite courting rituals, but those were also characterized by achieving a desired balance between what bride and groom could each bring to the marriage, something that had to be ideally contracted prior to a marriage agreement to both parties’ advantage (though as we have mentioned in relation to Bess’s first marriage, pre-nuptial agreements still left quite a bit of room for future dispute). In spite of the many ambiguities associated with fairing, however, some patterns can be discerned that are important for us to examine in order to come closer to understanding how objects served as vehicles to negotiate gendered marriage dynamics in early modern England.

First of all, tokens were taken seriously. The law considered the giving and accepting of gifts as a sign of a binding engagement, either as a contract expressed in *verba de presenti*, making an immediate commitment, or *verba de future-*, committing to a future engagement following, for example, an inheritance.<sup>183</sup> The ring in particular was a sign before the law of a particular solemnity in terms of mutual consent and contract between parties. It’s circularity (like Ter Borch’s peace contract table discussed in the previous chapter) signified the mutual and continuous flow of love (which is why it was placed on the fourth finger of the left hand, where “love’s vein” was thought to course).<sup>184</sup> It was less the value of the ring than its symbolic meaning that was of importance—when Rosa Clarke of Leicestershire received a betrothal ring in 1590, for instance, the object was described as if it were “as fit for her as if it were made for her finger, or as if her finger had been in the place where it was made”.<sup>185</sup> It functioned thus as

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<sup>179</sup> See e.g. Barbara J. Harris, op. cit. 14 and Elizabeth Griffiths and Jane Whittle, *Consumption and Gender in the Early Seventeenth-Century Household: The World of Alice Le Strange* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>180</sup> We will turn to discussions of a new Renaissance emphasis on companionate marriage below. See e.g. Stone (1977). For a critique of Stone’s assumptions that affective change was tied to economics and demography (hence, that in general little love was shared between early modern married couples) and traveled in a classed manner top-down, see Alan MacFarlane’s review of Stone in *History and Theory* 18, no. 1 (1979), 103-26.

<sup>181</sup> O’Hara, 64. Emphasis mine.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, 65

<sup>183</sup> Cressy, 267.

<sup>184</sup> O’Hara, 62.

<sup>185</sup> Cressy 246.

an external, legible, materialization of the glue conjoining a pair, or what William Gouge (the Puritan rector of St. Ann's Blackfriars, London) declared marriage ought to do, i.e. "the two made one flesh, that is lawfully joined together".<sup>186</sup> We are reminded, again, of the metaphorical power of inlay work in the Shrewsbury table. The ring may have been the most obvious sign by which a "marriage before it be knit should be contracted", but it was not by any means the only type of engagement token.<sup>187</sup> Gloves and ribbons also could easily signify the tying of a knot. At weddings, the couple typically wore them as ornaments (along with "bride knots") and also gifted them to guests in a gesture that "tied" the new marriage into a larger circle of kin and community.<sup>188</sup> Other objects could function in a similarly "binding" manner, like food. In 1605, to give one example, a certain Elizabeth Yealand of Middleton-in-Teesdale told a Durham court that she had acted as courier for gifts exchanged between a befriended couple: on one occasion she delivered a ring for Agnes Newbie to James Handley, along with a root "of ginger, of which she had bit off a piece, willing [Elizabeth] to tell him that for her sake it would content him to bite off another piece of the same ginger."<sup>189</sup> James sent Agnes back four apples- as well as two French crowns, a gold ring and a packet of her hair. It would seem that he also bit off a chunk of the ginger root.<sup>190</sup>

The type of gifts exchanged during a courtship shifted over that courtship's duration, with each new sort of fairing carrying different implications about the nature of the future match. In preliminary stages of courting, it seems that gifts like clothing and leather were the norm, which then gave way over time to objects that mark a more official type of contractual agreement, like rings, or money. One moved, by this logic, from personal gifts to objects that more clearly referenced financial arrangements. These arrangements could on occasion include furniture and household goods, like when the West-Country gentleman John Hayne gave Susan Henley a Puritan book (Arthur Hildersham's *Lecture upon the Fourth of John* - today it is perhaps somewhat difficult for us to imagine her joy upon receipt), as well as ribbons, rings, purses, bracelets, stockings, and gloves plus a "cabinet bought in Rouen" for 3 pounds.<sup>191</sup> Large tables would obviously have been more unwieldy tokens than a small (but expensive) Rouen cabinet, or ribbons, or rings. Rather than being moved back and forth, thus, tables tended to play a kind of brokering role in the contractual process, providing a ground upon which convivial table rituals such as the shaking of hands that usually accompanied gift giving—known as handfasting—could take place.

Handfasting in particular called attention to ritual actions of corporeal interweaving, a kind of gestural performance of rings and ribbons exchanged.<sup>192</sup> And it frequently occurred at

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 242.

<sup>187</sup> The Elizabethan lecturer Henry Smith exclaimed, "every marriage before it be knit should be contracted." Ibid, 267.

<sup>188</sup> On gloves as wedding gifts see Jones and Stallybrass op cit. 100; see also Cressy, 363-367 on ribbons, flowers and wedding apparel.

<sup>189</sup> Cressy, 264.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, 264.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, 240.

<sup>192</sup> Handfasting implies a ritual action (shaking hands) and was used mostly in the north of England; the words and the action alike attend to gestures of corporeal interweaving, which parallel contractually agreed upon sets of mutual obligations. Hence, the plighting of troths is one in which "their hands being joined" the man says to the woman in Richard Greenham's *Treatise of a Contract before Marriage* (1599), "I, R. do promise to thee, Fi., that I will be thine husband, which I will confirm by public manner ,in pledge whereof I give thee mine hand. In the like manner doth the woman to the man. Then after prayer the parties are dismissed." The joining of hands stands in as a binding promise of a future performance of marriage as a partnership. Ibid, 269.

tables, as Gouge noted when he wrote that in some places “the handfasting...is made a great feast and superfluous banquet.”<sup>193</sup> In such late sixteenth-century ceremonies, the settlement of the wedding contract was cemented by the public raising of cups at the table.<sup>194</sup> In 1573, for instance, the Durham husbandman William Laborn went with his neighbors to “record the handfasting of Janet Ferry and Martin High one Sunday evening after service. The ceremony took place at Janet’s father’s house over dinner”;<sup>195</sup> and in 1603, to give another example, John Riley invited guests in Wasterley to celebrate the marriage “betwixt Henry Aire and Jane Ridley. And the said John Ridley of his own cost bestowed a good dinner upon them.”<sup>196</sup> Sometimes, cups associated with a previous marriage could even factor into a handfasting ritual, as when the widow Joan Bridger visited Willian Nightingall who was drinking from a silver goblet which he handed to her saying that is “was a token betwixt me and my first wife and I do drinke to you in the same on condition you shal be my wife.” This kind of interweaving of multiple marriages resonates with the sorts of interlacing we observed in the Eglantine strapwork: marriage bonds didn’t disappear when a spouse died, but were instead woven into more complex networks of kinship webs that comingled in a highly visible manner at a table in the context of handfasting and ritualized nuptial contracting. Table rituals thus become a site at which a community sanctioned the interweaving of a couple’s hands, following the exchange of tokens.<sup>197</sup>

Moreover, at the wedding ceremony itself, tables could also be set up as a node of communal gift exchange. William Vaughan noted how “the marriage day being come, the invited guests do assemble together, and at the very instant of the marriage do cast their presents, which they do bestow upon the new married folks, into a basin, dish, or cup, which standeth upon the table in the church, ready prepared for that purpose.”<sup>198</sup> This practice, however, oriented itself to couples in need, who would benefit from a shower of money at the ceremony.<sup>199</sup> For less impoverished unions, “no nuptial festivity would be complete without convivial distribution of food and drink, as the business with the ring gave way to the ‘business of the kitchen.’ It would not do to start the married life hungry, or fail to offer hospitality to guests.”<sup>200</sup> Even Clandestine weddings were generally celebrated at table, at which it was customary for the groom to serve the bride, inverting gendered etiquette, while the priest raised a glass after the ceremony at table to officially announce the tied knot and signal the occasion of rejoicing.<sup>201</sup> On these occasions, gifts were often given by guests that were oriented around the ritual feast. Wealthy relatives may have contributed silverware, plate, or money to the celebratory meal,

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid, 271.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid, 273. In the seventeenth century, the public nature of these kinds of ritual agreement/betrothal ceremonies shifted to agreements concluded by lawyers at a private desk, out of public view. In terms of tables as furnishings for these events, there is also a shift from the long dormant in a hall, or public space, to a smaller desk, or gate-leg type round table that is more intimate in scale.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> O’Hara, 84.

<sup>197</sup> The tokens themselves (as Elizabethan litigation indicates) could also serve as proof in a court of law of private handfasting agreements between the involved parties.

<sup>198</sup> Cited in Cressy, 366.

<sup>199</sup> We might note here, however, again how stone altars in English protestant churches were replaced during Elizabeth’s reign with portable wooden tables, as per a 1564 order, which stipulated that a “Parishe provide a decent table standing on a frame for the Communion table” “altar table” made of heavy stone that was immovable and tinged with Catholic implications. These new tables are like shorter long (i.e. dormant) tables and can be easily carried around and positioned depending on the occasion (their aprons are carved on all sides). Fiske, 222.

<sup>200</sup> Cressy, 369.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid, 353.

though it was also customary for the bride's family to cover the hospitality. Nonetheless, as a community event, the laden table served as an instrument for staging reciprocal relationships: neighbors might bring food, like guests at a 1567 wedding in Surrey who contributed swans, capons, partridges, woodcocks and other birds, hares, does, hinds, game, fish, sweetmeats, puddings, cheeses, spices and wines" to the party.<sup>202</sup> Obviously one table would not be enough to hold all of this food; hence one easily understands a description of this type of event that highlighted how "fourteen tables sat full at one time" while guests arrived and departed to the continuous sound of "pleasant lessons and choice tunes".<sup>203</sup>

The marriage rituals detailed above tended to belong to the gentry rather than the English elite, but events like the large wedding banquet point to how tables at marriages could serve as a unifying space around which multiple classes could conjoin as an expression of community in the vein of traditional lordly hospitality: at a wedding, those of one's social status as well as those below and above could find a place as part of the broader *communitas*, partaking and ratifying the married couple's new status. An elite 16<sup>th</sup>-century wedding, like an elite 16<sup>th</sup>-century funeral would have drawn throngs from all levels of society; Shrewsbury's funeral in 1591 drew an estimated 20,000 onlookers, including 8,000 paupers, like those we detected in Sir Henry Unton's memorial portrait, who received a portion of bread and one penny.<sup>204</sup>

Tables stood at each crucial juncture—at each paratactical moment, to recall Evett's terminology—of early modern English marriage ritual (handfasting, church, final celebration). Although marriage tokens tended to be smaller than a *dormant*, we can, nevertheless, see how an object like the Eglantine table thereby materialized numerous cultural aspects of English marriage transactions. Specifically, the table marked a ritual progression from one set of houses to another: the homes of the couple's parents (or their own homes, if they had been previously married like the widows Joan Bridger, or Bess née Hardwick) via the church (home to the broader community) and finally the couple's new home together, where the community was invited to assemble at table in a gesture of hospitality that marked the founding – and basis – of the new marital union. The table, thus, conjoined the bodies of the couple to one another, its legs standing in for theirs, while its top a weighty new, level, bridge between them. At the same time, it connected their united body to their larger network of kin and community.<sup>205</sup> In this context, the table thus served as a conspicuously important instrument as well as a representational object that staged the intermeshing of multiple bodies into a joined space of concord (as it also did in Ter Borch's image of peace).

### *A Woman's Place*

One of the key physical and visual qualities of this new *joined* (and rectangular) marital body was balance: wife, husband, and between them a hospitable home lay in an ideal equilibrium. And if part of the marriage negotiations symbolized by fairing was economic (e.g. food, or furniture representing the future household), so too was the table's balance. For the administration of the early modern English household depended on financial planning and

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid 365.

<sup>203</sup> See note 67 above and Cressy, 372.

<sup>204</sup> Lovell, 368. Unfortunately there seems to be no record of Bess's and Shrewsbury's marriage festivities, just as there is no surviving copy of their marriage contract.

<sup>205</sup> "Hospitality meant inviting others to enter your house, sit at your table, and consume food prepared in your kitchen." Griffiths and Whittle, 17.

management that was split between men and women; balance in the home depended on the harmonious balancing of household accounts. This balance in accounting had much to do with status. Underspensing damaged a wealthy family's position in the community because it denoted a neglect of the reciprocal, hospitable, communal relationships that were seen as the social and political bedrock of a large estate.<sup>206</sup> Overspensing, however, could also prove disastrous (and signify moral turpitude) since it could result in the sale of land. Since land *was* status, its loss denoted diminished standing.<sup>207</sup> As a representation of this standing, the table's balance was, therefore, important to maintain, though the relationship between man and wife that supervised the household accounts was, *contra* the fiction of the table as a form, generally *imbalanced* along gendered lines.

Sixteenth-century marriages tended to be characterized by a gendered division of labor. As Robert Cleaver wrote in 1598, "The dutie of the husband is, to get mony and provision: and of the wives, not vainely to spend it."<sup>208</sup> This "not vain" spending implied something more complex than what we today would associate with "shopping."<sup>209</sup> For household management was, in Tudor England, the essential task of housewifery and this encompassed the full management of the household and its provisioning. Women, therefore, typically oversaw all expenses associated with food, clothing, medical care, and entertaining. Men generally dealt alone when it came to travel, transport, or sporting/hunting expenses and home repairs and construction, or similarly large purchases, were either made jointly or by men on their own.<sup>210</sup> As the head of the household, the Tudor male controlled the family purse; although women were tasked with ensuring the home was well stocked, they were subordinate to their husband in regard to financial access and decision making: the Tudor wife generally lacked the power to authorize contracts, incur debt, or spend larger sums without the permission of her husband.<sup>211</sup>

This meant that Tudor women tended to be educated in the basics of arithmetic and household management which brought knowledge and control over the home and its associated webs of production/consumption networks (including peddlers, merchants, farmers, relations, etc.). This was *not*, however, equivalent to the exercise of power. Women's skills as consumers who would "go or ride to market" thus involved certain special sets of abilities that were physical and, when linked to provisioning, sensory: sniffing, tasting, pinching, judging with eye, nose,

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<sup>206</sup> Whittle and Griffiths, 14.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Cited in Ibid, 26.

<sup>209</sup> Shopping as a term (if not an activity) came into widespread use first during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Whittle and Griffiths observe the highly gendered use of the term as making itself manifest, for example, in the fact that literary sources from the period tend to characterize shopping as female (or associate it with women's spending) whereas historical evidence in account books bears witness to the fact that men shopped as well as women. In both cases, "shopping" is something associated with pleasure, rather than the provisioning of the household, although as Claire Walsh has shown, women were more visible as shoppers since they had to make purchases for the household and tended to go out in groups, vs. men who tended to "shop" alone. The conspicuousness of woman buying and selling at market lent itself to gendered prejudice regarding women's supposed "natural" acquisitiveness: wealthy, as well as poorer women, could easily arouse suspicious of unbridled overspending, indicating a trespass of the virtue of thrift and prudent money management. See Griffiths and Whittle, 10 and Claire Welsh, "Shops, Shopping, and the Art of Decision Making in Eighteenth-Century England" in *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830*, ed. John Styles and Amanda Vickery (New Haven: Yale University Press/Yale Center for British Art, 2006), 151-78.

<sup>210</sup> Alison Wiggins, "Money, marriage and remembrance: telling stories from the Cavendish financial accounts," in Lisa Hopkins, ed. *Bess of Hardwick: New Perspectives* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 44.

<sup>211</sup> If their house was managed by a steward, the woman might be subordinate to his decisions as well, if he were acting on her husband's authority. See Griffiths and Whittle, 8-14.

tongue, and hand.<sup>212</sup> At the same time, these physical skills were connected to the calculated maintenance of the household balance in the accounts, and—through the dutiful performance of housewifery—to the maintenance of the social balance in the marriage along the terms of Cleaver quoted above. This was true of entertaining and hospitality on a grand scale as well. Henry Percy, the ninth Earl of Northumberland, for example, complained in 1604 that women exerted so much influence in the home (more than elsewhere in Europe, he claimed). This was explained, he said, by the fact that men were often away on business, which meant that women became the central node of hospitality: “Entertayning all comers, conducting there guests to there chambers; farefull of there breakfasts, keeping them company at cards, with many more complements of this nature, whiche is not ordinary in other places and other nations.”<sup>213</sup> The Earl’s complaints indicate that hosting and entertaining was one sphere in which elite women could carve out a space of authority for themselves, through the vehicle of the table. On the other hand, however, the gendered structure of the marriage meant that even in her husband’s absence, a wife needed to keep track of and justify household expenses in order to prove that her housekeeping was not “vain.”<sup>214</sup>

The balance of the table was thus, a fiction, since while the marriage depended on husband and wife working in tandem, *authority* over the table of household finances was distinctly weighted in the direction of the husband. Certain family portraits, however, and as I will suggest in the following, the Eglantine table, were designed to present a more nuanced recalibration of these asymmetrical relations. A large percentage of Tudor portraits were marriage portraits, painted either of couples recently married, of couples who had been married for years, or couples with their children.<sup>215</sup> These painted “tables” in many ways took up the themes I have been detailing now in relation to the household table: a couple could appear in a single “table”, or they could be painted as pendants, one panel for the husband and one for the wife. In each case, the coupling of man and wife *performed* the balancing act described above in relation to the physical, household table (and the table of accounts).

In many ways, this ‘tabling’ of the married couple lends itself to being read in sixteenth-century England in terms of the rise of the new ideal of a “companionate marriage.” Throughout the century, a new sense was emerging—especially in the gentry and expressed particularly in marital advice books like Edmund Tilney’s *Briefe & pleasant discourse of duties in Mariage* (published in the same year as Bess and Shrewsbury’s children married, 1568)—that the strength of a marriage’s balance depended most of all on the affection shared between man and wife.<sup>216</sup> Tilney compares the cultivation of this affective bond to a growing flower (“the Flower of Friendshippe”), using the floral-vegetal metaphor as a means of suggesting that conjugal love

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<sup>212</sup> Walsh, 163.

<sup>213</sup> Cited in Heal, 179.

<sup>214</sup> While criticized by misogynists like Percy, women also were blamed for the erosion of traditional hospitality and table culture thanks to their association with spending and shopping related to Court culture in London. It was a double-bind.

<sup>215</sup> This path of interpretation was developed in large part inspired and informed by an article written by my advisor Elizabeth Honig, and it is dialogue with her work that the remainder of this chapter will unfold, Honig, “In Memory: Lady Dacre and Pairing by Hans Eworth” in *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture c. 1540-1660*, ed. Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn (London: Reaktion Books, 1990), 60–85.

<sup>216</sup> Honig, 64–65. As the debates over companionate marriage (e.g. Stone and Macfarlane) have shown, the question of affection in marriage reveals itself to have been deeply classed, though certainly one cannot say with any certainty that there were more loving relationships in one social class than another (relationships of convenience being endemic to couplings in all social classes), though one can identify differing ideals depending on social position.



will grow most bountifully in a marriage if it is grounded upon mutual inclination, something the eglantine blooms that weave together and exude divine “scents” from the Shrewsbury table may well also suggest.<sup>217</sup> In aristocratic circles, however, where dynastic concerns were key, the companionate marriage took longer to take root. Portraits of the peerage, thus, tend to portray familial relationships in England with a conspicuous gravitas, though we must be careful to construe these “non-affective” family portraits as a true representation of the nature of the sitters’ emotional relationships, since portraits always only provide a sense of how those portrayed wish to be seen, rather than an image of who they “really” are. Curiously, around the time that Bess was marrying George Talbot, a number of aristocratic family portraits were made in England that, if non-affective in terms of the portrayal of emotional interconnectivity, prominently featured husbands and wives gathered at a table that is visually balanced between them.

One of these is a portrait of Lord Cobham (William Brooke) and his second wife Frances Newton, who, by the 1560s, had become Bess’ closest friend. (Fig.17) The family portrait (1567) by the unknown Master of the Countess of Warwick (a follower, or pupil, of Hans Eworth) positions the Cobhams behind table around which six of their seven children are gathered. To the far left (at Lord Cobham’s right) sits his sister, Elisabeth Brooke, who had died two years before, but to whom the Cobhams owed much gratitude for ingratiating them into Queen Elizabeth’s court, though Frances herself had served the Queen since the 1550s and was on intimate terms with her as well.<sup>218</sup> It would seem that Francis and William commissioned the painting together, in part in Elisabeth’s memory, but equally to commemorate their own dynastic ambitions and to cement their social status.<sup>219</sup> The painting bears several similarities with the contemporaneous Eglantine table. To begin with, at the image’s center we find a strapwork cartouche framing text. Here, rather than an English “device”, we find a text in Latin, more akin to a memorial inscription. The text celebrates the Cobhams’ ambition to conceive a bountiful brood of children, a task at which they have obviously succeeded, as the portrait demonstrates. Frances and William, flanking the table to the left and right, appear as the legs (hidden below the table’s clothed top) and also its heads. Their bodies are strong and upright, like the wainscoted, angled architectural unit (of uncertain function) behind William and the stone pillar behind Frances. Through the portrait, this strength is being transmitted to their children (Frances holds the reins sewn into the child’s clothing second from right).

The table is the point where the family bounty stages itself most conspicuously, since the well-laid table seems to both mirror and bolster the strength of the painting’s dynastic claims. Gleaming plates and tasteful desserts presumably gathered from the family estate (including walnuts—a reminder to think of the “rich man’s wood” that constitutes the Eglantine table—along with pears, grapes, cherries, quince and even more exotic bounty like a parrot and pet monkey from overseas) form a rich array of fragrant sustenance, a material bounty that finds its equivalents in the Cobham’s offspring. These are labeled by age and divided and balanced by gender, like their parents. The portrait formula of the family grouped around a table was Netherlandish, like the cartouche’s strapwork, where it perhaps was more associated with bourgeois clientele.<sup>220</sup> Yet in its translation to England in the 1560s, the family portrait at a table seems to have been able to shrink the increasingly popular desire for horizontal rows of dynastic

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>218</sup> See James, 52-54. The Marchioness of Northampton (d. 1565) was close with William Parr, though Lord Cobham himself also enjoyed an intimate friendship with William Cecil, cementing the Cobham position at Court.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

portraits in the long galleries of aristocratic homes into one image, which at the same time staged the balance of the family by conflating the qualities of man and wife as a couple with that of the joined object (a table) over which they preside. The symbolism of the English dormant (a *long* table) obviously dovetailed well with the social and pictorial demands of presenting dynastic *longevity*.

Women, of course, did not have to be present in such scenes, such as in a recently discovered painting (now at Boughton House), which stages Henry VIII's genealogy around his green-draped *dormant*.<sup>221</sup> (Fig.18) Since Edward (closest to the King), Mary, and Elizabeth (farthest away, at right, and barely at the table) all sprang from different mothers, none of the mothers are included. They have been erased; Henry's solid, singular frame (derived from the Holbein's striking prototypes and suggestively clutching a knobby turned cane) is, as we have already noted, the only frame (and only table) necessary to claim monarchal authority. In the Cobhams' portrait, however, the "feminine dynamic", to use Susan E. James' term, finds a more obvious inclusion.<sup>222</sup> It is a key part of the painting's balance and also the link (via William's sister) between a memorialized past and a rich future. William and his sister – present through the artifice of painting since she was dead when the painting was made – meld through their black garb into a kind of singular support on the left, a doubling of a man and the sister who aided his social ascent; indeed, the artist has positioned a grotesque carved female bust directly above Elisabeth's head, thereby extending her height subtly so that she becomes both built into the supportive architecture and (almost) of equal stature as her brother. On the right (or their left), stands William's wife – also key to the family's social position (thanks to her social proximity to the Queen) so that that painting's compositional and metaphorical strength relies structurally on the women who serve as its bookends, legs, columns, or frames.

Sixteenth-century marriage portraiture generally tended to position a man, through gesture and eye contact, in the "speaking" and thus the active, dynamic role as opposed to the passive, chaste, reduced (often literally in scale) woman. Yet here, it is Lady Cobham (as large and as dominant in the image as her husband) whose eyes actually address the beholder more actively; her husband in turn sternly gazes off to his left, his gaze paired with that of his sister into the distance instead of straight ahead so that the standard, gendered frames of family portraiture have been slightly, and very subtly, altered. At the same time, the various frames attended to assiduously by the painter (the wainscoting, the cartouche, the column) also evince, like the Eglantine table, a knowledge of current aesthetic trends: a hint of perspectival recession, Flemish design elements derived from printed ornament books, goods acquired with an eye for the freshest, latest designs from abroad. If "going to market" was Lady Cobham's marital duty (not spending "vainly") and larger expenditures like home-building were Lord Cobham's domain, the two seem to have found a felicitous middle, in spite of their "non-affective" pictorial interaction. For the items they have gathered around them in their shared household are plentiful, well-tended (the gardens and their produce, for instance), as well as knowledgeable and cosmopolitan, as behooved a family with ambitions at Court.

So taste and genealogical bounty become linked as part of a collaborative program in which the literal Cobham table is also an image-table for picturing a family tree that, firmly

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<sup>221</sup> It is worth noting that unlike in the Netherlands, where family portraits at a table appears to have emerged as a genre, the royal family would not have had family meals. It's also interesting to note that while children's furniture is sometimes mentioned in inventories, often children were expected to stand at table, rather than sit in smaller versions of their parent's seats. See Luff and Wolsey, 79-81.

<sup>222</sup> See James, 7-78 on women as collectors, patrons, and artists in Tudor England.

grounded in stable nuptial equilibrium, will flourish and produce flowers, fruit, and a fecund family line over time. The memorial portrait becomes not only a marker of life passed, but also conflates with the literal table as the basis of life in the future so that portraiture serves not only as a fleeting record (children pictured at a specific age), but also a “bid for immortality” that springs in the hope for a familial continuity, well-tended like the “flower of friendship”; a constant presence that exceeds the mortal presence of the actors in the image. They are present, but the claim (hope?) for continuity manifests itself as a mixture between the object of the painting (table) in which their presence is memorialized and the table in the image, whose form offers itself symbolically to future generations of the Cobhams’ descendants.<sup>223</sup> Women stand physically at both sides of this representational construct, but as we have seen, this is precisely what makes them an active part of painting’s conceptual center.

This was indeed not always the case. A genealogical portrait of the following year (1568) is similarly organized around a table, but it does not present a comparable image of man and wife as symmetrical pillars that frame the composition and, metaphorically or pictorially, support the table in the image.<sup>224</sup> (Fig. 19) In the 1568 painting, instead, Edward 3<sup>rd</sup> Lord Windsor stands in the traditionally masculine spot at the left of the painting, flanked by his wife Katherine de Vere and his mother (at right), and with the Windsors’ four sons seated at the table in front. Edward sets the tone, grasping his sword’s hilt while his sons play masculine games of chess and cards at the table below. The tablespace constitutes a zone in which ambiguous agonistic narratives unfold: the two card-playing children look out at the viewer expectantly, clutching cards to their breasts and thereby foreclosing the beholder’s access to strategic information—given that Windsor was a staunch Roman Catholic, withholding and discretion may well have been a valuable survival strategy. The children playing chess, alternatively, channel their father’s swordsmanship into the pursuit of further strategic-planning exercises: how to best conquer an inimical playing field. Katherine, in turn, follows her husband’s direction. Her position, while central, clearly flanks his and she reads as a *reflection* of his dominant position.

Edward is the start of a narrative in the painting: a “reading” of the painting encouraged by the painter through the placement of an inscription to Edward’s left in the upper left corner: like a book, the story begins *here*. Katherine’s role as a reflection of her husband corresponded with the decorum of gendered pictorial conventions, which rehearsed the notion of woman as being defined through their husbands (e.g. in terms of financial autonomy). The “reflective” nature of the wife (here Katherine de Vere) also dovetailed with the prevailing Aristotelian notion that women’s nature was physical, rather than intellectual, since women (like Eve from Adam) are created from men and subject to the physical desires and irrational passions of the body, whereas men were equipped with a rational soul to counteract their corporeal urges.<sup>225</sup> Created in her husband’s image, Katherine is, when alone, incomplete: she lacks the immutability of the male soul, distinct from the female limitations of “vain” (*vanitas*), mortal, matter. By leading the way in the portrait, her husband “forms” her with the authority of his framing mind—the same authority with which he assumed the position as financial decision-maker in the home. Katherine de Vere, thus, appears as she should: a reflection of her husband and the material vessel through which their offspring came into the world. Around this table the boys are becoming men not through the consumption of the food she’s provided, but through the repetition of the manly pursuits that they, like their father, rehearse through competitive games.

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<sup>223</sup> On themes temporality and memorialization in British marriage portraiture see Honig, especially 68- 81.

<sup>224</sup> Now in the Bute collection, artist unknown.

<sup>225</sup> On these portrait conventions see Honig, 79.

The table here, then, is recast not as a balanced unity between companions (male and female), but rather as a male space of territorial occupation and domination. In this table women are not supportive legs; they are material conduits for social reproduction, extensions of their husbands, or sons.<sup>226</sup>

The way in which the 1568 Windsor portrait replays gender conventions through its pictorial arrangement helps to illuminate the subtle dimensions of the 1567 Cobham painting, even though the proponent of companionate marriages we encountered before (Edmund Tilney) did not conceive of the table as a space of equality in the ways that the Cobham painting makes manifest. Explaining how to maintain balance in a relationship, companionate or not, Tilney suggested that the husband “by little and little must gently procure that he maye also steale away hir [his wife’s] private will, and appetite, so that of two bodies there may be made one onelye hart.”<sup>227</sup> His remark about how a husband out to swallow his wife’s appetite is telling: If a woman’s will is materially based and, thus, debased in the sense of vain and greedy, then it is connected, Tilney suggests, to physical appetite, a hunger for things. As ornament and reflection of her husband’s material form, she is both repulsive and attractive, much, as Elizabeth Honig has suggested in the context of sixteenth-century British marriage portraits, like a painting itself, which seduced the beholder through its “artificial” and hence feminine surface.<sup>228</sup> The table is one site in which this dialogue over the power dynamics in an English marriage apparently could be conveniently staged, not least because of the direct relationship between the table and appetite, or food. It was a site in which the nuances of a marriage could unfold representationally either in the performance of entertaining, or in a portrait. In both cases, the wife’s task of provisioning for her family’s appetite could be negotiated in various ways alongside her husband’s role as authoritative *pater Familias*.

The table concentrated several questions related to the nature of authority and appetite around a single, symbolically laden object. If a wife’s role was also to provide for her family’s physical *appetite*. So if a husband engulfs the nourishment that his wife has provided (co-opting, in other words, her appetite and make it his own), has she not performed her role in a certain sense appropriately, sustaining him through material provisioning, as when Bess “remembered” Shrewsbury by sending him a baked capon?<sup>229</sup> In the Cobham portrait where women furnish a supportive and balanced frame for the table, the artist has taken pains to highlight “women’s work” in the form of the dessert the Cobham children are enjoying. Each object invites the beholder to zero in on it, and to enjoy its physical qualities. The painting prompts us to inspect the hard roundness of the apples, the reflective surfaces of the grapes (each highlighted with a dot of glistening light), to prod (with our eyes) the lumpiness of the quince, or scratch the hard wrinkles of the walnuts. The gleaming plates and goblet alert the eye to the houseware’s material value as well as to sustenance they proffer (which we can better see thanks to the tilted angle at which the vessels are represented). In other words, as beholders, we are invited to perform as

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<sup>226</sup> De Vere’s gesture clasping at her lavish necklace serves the purpose of (chastely) displaying her wedding ring, chaining her body further to her husband’s while also flagging her Christian devotion since the pendant leads the eye upward to the cross directly at her neck.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Sir William Cavendish had a hearty appetite, consuming for example up to four pints of wine a day. Hubbard, 20. Bess ensured that his wine cup flowed plentifully, and also took care of providing his shoes, hose, shirts, and “trimmed and embroidered his doublets, arranged for the skinner to line his jerkins with fur and make his ‘buskins’” as well as preparing soothing possets (drinks) of ginger, sugar, anis, and licorice to ease his troubled digestion. Lovell, 61-62.

well as enjoy the sensual tasks associated with women's work—the prodding, testing, smelling, feeling that undergirds a Tudor household's balance—just as the artist also replicates this feminine work with his brush. Perhaps the figures' stiffness—their resolutely controlled and non-affective emotional tenor—is meant to mitigate the potentially threatening seductive nature of material appetite; Lady Cobham, as previously mentioned, grasps the reins on her child's back, while the small bird seated on the child's arm (third from left) is tied to a perch placed next to an apple at the lower edge of the table. If the apple adjacent to the perch entices viewers to grab it—we here are tempted like the smaller children at left, one of whom clamors for grapes while the other greedily clutches an apple—the perch-leash combination speaks to the cultivation of a balanced restraint that comes with time and training. On one hand, the overview of the Cobham table therefore presents a vision of property and propriety as linked: we see the production of dynasty on display, enjoying the fruits of its success, which are simultaneously the sustenance that comes with land ownership, as well as the means of its continuation. Things are where and how they should be. On the other hand, this dynamic is described in terms of splitting. Unity, that is to say, is comprised of a male and female parts, in equal measure materially exuberant and mentally controlled. Women's work, therefore, does not appear to pose a problem in terms of sensual address, but instead propose a pictorial solution dependent on a schematics of balance, symbolized and staged through the instrument of the table. In fact, according to Susan E. James, it was actually not uncommon for elite English couples to outfit their dining areas with pictures of food, pots, and pans. In this way, the actual long, or dormant, table was outfitted with a pictorial double, generously provisioned in manner that affirmed the wife's role in the household, specifically in ensuring that appetites and sociability were well taken care of.<sup>230</sup> These images, like the portraits we have examined, thus seem to deploy the table as a specific means by which to articulate an ideal marriage as a balance between man and wife.

The context we have established through our investigation of fairing and family portraiture establishes a broader context for the production of the Hardwick Eglantine table, locating its technique and form within a social context of distinction and marriage symbolism. This answers, in part, the question of why someone would produce the table in the obviously expensive and complex manner in which Bess and Shrewsbury selected. The table carried all sorts of implications about what a marriage ought to be, and what type of sociability the married couple hoped to generate in their home. Yet some essential aspects about the table remain to be explored. How can we develop, for example, our investigation of the importance of *detail* in relation to the table, something we've touched upon in relation to notions of social distinction (in part one of this chapter) and in terms of “women's work” (in part two)? Is there a way in which accounting for these details might relate to issues of gendered labor? In one sense, I suggest, the Eglantine table does make use of certain similar pictorial strategies as the Cobham portrait when it comes to the use of trompe l'oeil-type: the table asks the beholder, somehow, to imagine holding, using, and sensually melding with the objects depicted (which in some cases, like the game boards or the sheet music could actually have been used). Like the Cobham fruit, these elements stage, therefore, a spectacle of possession, but also withholding. In both cases, it is almost as if one's appetite is whet, only to be checked. On the other hand, the table's cards and games are more similar to the iconography we found in the Windsor portrait associated with men. To be sure, there are “friendshippe” roses on the table, perhaps hinting at a feminine

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<sup>230</sup> In 1588, the Earl and Countess of Leicester, for example, owned “a table of a woman with fruits and other things” while Alice Judde, the daughter of the Lord Mayor of London, left a painting in her will to a Mr. Dr. Smith of “Cookery”. James, 35.

element in the ensemble (love's bloom demanded female and male components for Tilney) but the Eglantine does not offer its users "cookery" in the manner of other contemporaneous female householding paintings located in dining spaces. Instead, as in the Windsor family image, the table's objects imply possession in terms of (pleasurable, musical even) spatial dominance.<sup>231</sup> Is Bess' table "manly"? Does the laying of the trump card denote a man's move, or a shrewd woman's turning of the tables on men, thanks in part to her judicious calculations in love, life, and household management? And in either case, while the table pays lip service to Bess' marriage with Shrewsbury, is it not odd that the Cavendishes take center stage in an object that purports in its form to be about "balance" in a new family union? In order to explore these questions, in the next section I turn attention to an examination of Bess' special identity as both a bride and a wealthy widow as well as the ways in which she fashioned herself through her household accounting.

### Accounting for Things

Bess's table, it would seem, is not really about her marriage to George Talbot, but about her relationship with William Cavendish—her second (and most beloved) husband. Starting from Bess's status as bride (of Talbot) and widow (of Cavendish), and drawing this together with the marriage imagery discussed above, in this final section of the chapter I want to think about the table as a self-portrait, and, in the process of doing so, to open up a new space for thinking about Bess—and the self-made Tudor woman, who fashioned herself through accounting practices *together* with her husband(s). As the object of a re-marrying widow, the table positions itself not necessarily between one man and one woman, but in a more ambiguous, but also more autonomous space.

The position of the early modern widow in England was somewhat vexed. Widowhood, for many aristocratic women, marked the culmination of their careers as wives and mothers.<sup>232</sup> On one hand, a wealthy widow could assume more control and autonomy over her finances than ever before (though this did not always go unchallenged, as was the case with Bess' first marriage). On the other hand, though less suspect than an unmarried woman, a widow—particularly one with money and property—would have come under considerable pressure to remarry. The rich widow was, this is to say, socially in a double bind: If she did not remarry, it was frowned upon; if she did remarry, it was also frowned upon. Would it harm the interests of children fathered by her dead husband? And, even worse, would she be cuckolding that husband if she remarried?<sup>233</sup>

Sometimes the widow's bind could lead to strikingly inventive pictorial innovations. Elizabeth Honig has analyzed, for example, the portrait of the widowed Lady Dacre (Mary Neville) by Hans Eworth (ca. 1555-58) as an example of ways in which artist and Neville articulated the latter's agency in the absence of her husband. Fig. 25 Neville sits at a table, holding a book in her left hand and a quill in her right, suspended above a notebook. We cannot read the text, which leaves us room to consider what she may be writing about: household accounts? Something devotional? As a reader and author, the widow at the table seems to have assumed the position of her man, who unlike her is encased in the portrait as a framed portrait

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<sup>231</sup> On 16<sup>th</sup> century militarism and music, see Kate Van Orden, *Music, Discipline, and Arms in Early Modern France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), especially chapter one on psalms and civil war.

<sup>232</sup> Harris, 127.

<sup>233</sup> See Honig, 63.

hanging on the wall to Neville's right. He is in the correct "male" place at her right, but here Thomas Fiennes (Lord Dacre) is diminished in scale and also activity—he is immobile and enframed. Though to her husband's left, Lady Dacre has assumed the "manly" position at the table: She is head of the household, the one calling the shots, autonomous in her decision-making, though still devoted to her dead husband. That, at least, is the fiction the painting produces for the viewer. Lady Dacre had by this time, in fact, already remarried twice and had children with her new husband(s). Yet in the Eworth painting, she remains linked to her first husband whose memory she *actively* preserves.<sup>234</sup> Although she and Fiennes remain connected by a web of connections—manifest here, for instance, in the floral tapestry (again, the *flower of friendship* flourishes) as well as her display of his portrait—Neville has clearly taken her husband's seat at the table. Given the specifics of Fiennes' death and the way the portrait is staged, one might well say that it is *she* who has now united their "two bodies" so that "there may be made one onely hart" (Tilney), at least as a representation anyway.

Such avenues were available to widows to maintain a faithful representational connection to their dead husbands — in this case for both Neville's sake and that of the Dacres' children, whose estates Mary Neville had managed to recuperate after her husband's dishonorable execution — while also repositioning themselves autonomous *and* remarried. Portraiture allowed Mary Neville to occupy numerous seats at once, overcoming discursive tropes of feminine "vanity" that denigrated the attractive materiality of women and paintings alike and demonstrating that, as a remarried widow, she could nonetheless control her image, leverage the memory of her husband, and protect the interests of their heirs, even though she had remarried and produced new offspring.

In Bess of Hardwick's case, we do not have a marriage portrait, or even a family portrait depicting her with any of her husbands. We do have, however, have a painting made by a follower of Eworth (now in Hardwick Hall, near the Eglantine table) that depicts Bess in the mid 1550s when she was still married to William Cavendish, or very recently widowed (Cavendish died in 1557). Fig. 24 At first glance, the portrait is unremarkable. Certainly, it is not innovative. Formerly mis-identified as Mary I (or oddly Margaret Douglas) due to the misleading inscription "Maria Regina", the painting depicts a youthful Bess in her 30s, dressed in exquisite finery (fit for a queen, as the misidentification suggests). Her high smock is richly embroidered in red patterns of knotwork and trellises, worn under a fur-lined gown fastened with twenty-seven costly golden aglets whose glistening surface finds echoes in two golden engraved bracelets, four gemstone rings, a double row of pearls around her neck and a French hood decorated with more gemstones, gold, and pearls. Bess gazes demurely to the side out of the frame, her hands clasping a pair of leather gloves. She is the image of a proper, wealthy, Tudor wife.

Yet as Alison Wiggins has suggested, the image becomes more complex and compelling when we read it alongside the account books that Bess and Cavendish kept together while they were married and which Bess preserved, along with the portrait, after his death, keeping them with her at Hardwick and leaving both there for posterity (and their second son William).<sup>235</sup> The accounting books from the early years of their marriage operate, I would suggest (following Wiggins) as a portrait of a marriage in which we can trace Bess coming into herself, gaining confidence and authority and, ultimately, shaping herself and her household in her image. The books are thus a marriage portrait, of sorts, but also a self-portrait, as is the painting. And like the

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<sup>234</sup> The painting may well commemorate the restoration of the Dacres' status and estates, which Henry VIII had confiscated after Fiennes was executed for murdering a gamekeeper in 1541. Honig, 60.

<sup>235</sup> Wiggins (2019).

painting, they commemorate Bess as a figure linked to her husband, but also independent from him. The means by which they do so is through a mode of *accounting* for *things* that in Bess' case linked material possessions with self-possession. This, I will suggest, found a subtle, but forceful visual echo in the aesthetic choices we've located in an object like the Eglantine table.

In order to understand how Bess' practices of accounting congealed in her table, as in the portrait mentioned above, let us first follow Wiggins' analysis of Bess' accounting books.<sup>236</sup> As I outlined above, Tudor women were expected to run the household, providing for their family's well-being and appetite. As a means of keeping track of this household spending, English homemakers usually maintained a written record of their expenses. This was generally not done with double-entry bookkeeping (as in the Jost Amman print featuring balanced tables), but instead in Bess' case with a kind of cost centering accounting in which totals were *not* "balanced" in terms of income and outcome but instead appeared as a running list.<sup>237</sup> In Bess' book, where there are sum totals, they do not even always add up. Instead, therefore, what we see is that the point of the book appears to have been as much to track what was spent as to record a detailed image, or portrait, of family life; yes, it was practical, but it also served a memorializing purpose, like a diary. It offered a kind of memorial, in list form, of what how her household grew over time. At the same time, such account books generally were also a means by which male authority could assert itself over women's household management since the expenses recorded would normally be checked by husbands or stewards (the Cavendishes' steward was Francis Whitfield) who authoritatively "signed off" as *pater familias*. These booklets, thus, reveal not only details of everyday life, but also the ways in which gendered power dynamics interwove to produce a family, or marriage, portrait that the book articulated as *a list of material objects*.

Bess began keeping her first account book with Cavendish in September 1548, the year after they married (Folger Shakespeare Library MS X.d. 486). While Sir William signed the recycled vellum booklet on the outside and inside the back cover, Bess inscribed her own name on the very first page, which was empty other than her signature. The gesture indicates that while the book was nominally theirs together, it primarily was *hers*: "Elyzabeth Cauendyssh".<sup>238</sup> From the very inception of the book, therefore, Bess placed herself at the center of the household, and the ways in which the keeping of the books changed over time (to be discussed presently) evinces both her growing confidence and authority, as well as her husband's trust in her abilities, as we will see. Records made by Bess account for the vast majority of the entries, though there are also records penned by Whitfield and Cavendish. Bess' recordings include the usual elements of Tudor housewife spending (clothes, food, sewing supplies, sweets for children, coral pacifiers, watch repairs, laundry, some tools). But they also record receipts on land rents for her husband, as well as profits from livestock sales and properties (bought and sold); often, she received these payments in person in her husband's stead (presumably he was often at court or "viewing" other properties). She was thus a manager invested with considerable trust on the part of her husband, who allocated the large sum of £44 directly to Bess for spending at her independent discretion.<sup>239</sup>

The one letter that exists between them further indicates Sir William's trust in his wife, since he instructs her to make a payment by saying that she "knowe my Store" by which he meant that Bess had direct, unsupervised access to cash coffers in their London home, and most

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<sup>236</sup> The rest of this section will draw primarily on Wiggins' analysis of the Cavendish accounts.

<sup>237</sup> Lovell, 365.

<sup>238</sup> Wiggins, 40.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid*, 44.



likely at their country estate too.<sup>240</sup> That a woman was keeping financial records was not in any way unusual, but what the Cavendishes' particular accounts speak to is a high level of trust and collaboration within the marriage. Perhaps theirs was not a companionate marriage in the affective sense or perhaps it was; in either case, their partnership was, as the records suggest, balanced quite evenly. They worked well together, and Bess had been granted a noticeable degree of autonomy. She kept a close eye on things for her husband, exceeding even the position of his steward Whitfield, whose tallies she actually supervised, signing off on them herself every single day they were recorded. She could direct him to spend money according to her wishes, and she could overrule decisions that he made. She was even able to authorize her kin in Derbyshire, Jane Kniveton and Aunt Linacre, to handle bills and receipts themselves related to construction on the new house at Chatsworth: in William's frequent work-related absence, she freely and fully began to assume the household position of authority.<sup>241</sup>

Cavendish may have been the first reader of the accounts, but he did not remain an *auditor* for long, as Wiggins has observed. This is apparent from the way in which the literal writing in the book changes over time. At the outset, the handwriting is neat, tightly ruled, more of a ledger to be read (clearly) by Sir William. After a short while, however, the handwriting shifts. The tight writing of the record's beginning was directed outward, at an external reader. It was also made all in one sitting at a time (the ink is consistent, as is the handwriting), indicating that Bess, or Whitfield (depending on who was writing) had gathered receipts and notes and was copying them as a block *neatly* for someone else to read. Sometimes there is evidence of Cavendish correcting Bess' spelling, but this gesture seems in a way more collaborative than controlling. William was clearly training her, and she blossomed in her role and in her responsibilities. As the book goes on, however, Bess' writing becomes more free and casual. Later pages are written *ad hoc* in terms of temporality, in different inks and without controlled, ruled handwriting. She was no longer writing for others, but for herself. She was recording her life as it unfolded, spontaneously, because she no longer had to report to an authority above her. She was her own authority.

This is not say, though, that Bess was becoming careless. On the contrary, the books are exacting in their detail throughout. She was (im)proving herself as a manager, as much to herself as to her husband. At the same time, she was also fashioning herself into a more sophisticated and socially educated woman: Bess corrected her own spelling for goods like damask, silk, or sugar repeatedly: we find each spelled in various ways, crossed out, and rewritten. This new writing—part of a process of “self-fashioning”—was also, tellingly, done in the first person. Whereas the entries that slip in from William's secretary are in the third person, Bess referred to *my* botones, *my* cape, *my* damaxke gone, *my* roffes. These changes in the writing style and handwriting corresponded roughly with the Cavendishes' purchase of Chatsworth, so that Bess' coming into her own as a bookkeeper occurs at the same time that she returned to Derbyshire triumphantly in style. The home she would build there, with William, would, thus, be as much *hers* as her husband's and it she would fill it with the material things her accounting recorded.

Like a diary, certain details appear to have had more emotional import to Bess in the accounts than other. Sometimes, detail was important because it could be a source of information in case of future (legal) disputes. But other elements appeared to matter to Bess more because they pertained to issues, which she felt of import for a variety of possible reasons. Lists of entertainments for high status guests, for instance, indicated her interest in building a network

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid, 47.

and attention to small matters that go along with conveying cultural capital – the kind of cultural capital we saw on prominent display in the Eglantine table. We know that when guests came to the Cavendishes' Newgate house, for example, they were entertained by a harpist and two minstrels, and fed lavishly: "sallats" cooked and raw, dressed with herbs, oil and vinegar, salmon boiled in ale, eels soused in brine, roasted apples, currants, sugar, dates, "raisings off the sonne", cinnamon, mace, ginger, almonds, oranges, lemons, "bay salt" from Biscay, saffron, garlic, and of course mutton, beef, port, rabbit, veal woodcock, larks, blackbirds, sparrows, herring, whiting, shrimp, "owsters", lampreys, sole, plaice, cockles, muscles, crab, dabs, suet, oatmeal, flour eggs, sweet and salty butter, strawberries, pears, apples figs, verjuice, comfits, yeast for pottage, and the high quality white bread called manchette.<sup>242</sup> The ingredients read like a laundry list of the kinds of food that was becoming popular in sixteenth-century England and which was readily available at London's increasingly cosmopolitan markets, including supplies bought at "nyghtt" for midnight snacking.<sup>243</sup>

The table on Newgate street put the Cavendishes' successful managerial partnership on display. Sir William was not a "rich" man, in the sense that he had not inherited a large landed estate. Instead, he was self-made, a fast-moving, opportunistic bureaucrat, whose money and career were founded upon, as I recounted above, assessing, assigning, and recording value to property. Bess appears to have taken on a similar role at home, building their domestic space into an advertisement of their social ambitions directed at their urbane, elite friends; their table menu indicates it. Since they did not have a large cash cushion, Bess' careful recordings of each and every material purchase thus also indicated a sustained interest in accounting for details and processing information with an acute eye to monetary value because *things* were socially important to her, but their cost was not to be taken lightly. In her own words, "Like as I would not have any superfluity or waste of any thing."<sup>244</sup>

Other details indicate Bess' attention to social status differently: she lists people familiar to her as well as people she doesn't know (say, servants versus peddlers) and she clearly differentiates between them. Female servants, for instance, are referred to by their first names, while men are listed by both first and family names, and close family members are referred to possessively ("my" husband) while more distant relations are denoted with "my" but also with their relational category (her step-daughters, for instance, are mostly referred to as "my dougter ...") though sometimes this changes over time as relationships develop). The point in recording these specificities seems for Bess to have been the creation of a network in which she appeared as the center of a nodal map of economic and familial relationships, that she controlled, or at least could phrase well on *her* own terms. She, therefore, fastidiously kept track of *types* of transactions (is money received, paid, lost, given, delivered?) because these nuances expressed personal preferences, proximities, and values that located her in particular ways within this larger kinship and commercial network. Ultimately, the emerging self-possession, which was being articulated through her accounting practices, enabled Bess to map her own physical and social *place*, which is to say, a world that she ordered according to her own decisions – with her husband's collaborative encouragement. Accounting for things, in all their detail, in these books was a process of world-building. And for Bess, it appears to also have been a means of generating a self-image, which she would more fully develop later (beginning with Chatsworth)

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<sup>242</sup> Hubbard, 27-28.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid. On the landscape of food in early modern England generally see Joan Thirsk, *Food in early modern England: phases, fads, fashions 1500-1760* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007).

<sup>244</sup> From a letter to the Steward Whitfield about expenses for Chatsworth, cited in Hubbard, 37.

in her numerous architectural “self-portraits”, where place-making assumed a new monumental scale.

Bess’ meticulous compiling of details actively took place not at a *dormant* like the Cavendish banquets, but at a desk. In 1551, Sir William spent 3s 5d to supply this “writing deske” with ink, paper, wax, a pen knife to trim her quill, a set of counters, and a balance with weights.<sup>245</sup> Was this table akin to the small table at which Eworth pictured Lady Dacre, posed with her writing supplies? We cannot know what Mary Neville was writing, nor can we know exactly where Bess’ accounting table was located in the 1550s, or what it looked like. Perhaps she had a portable desk that moved with her when she journeyed between Chatsworth and London (her writing utensils were bought in London). In any case, the portrait of Bess as a self, built by her and her husband as an accumulation of details well-examined and thoroughly assessed, is what we find when we turn back to the Hardwick portrait.

It is not unusual, of course, for Tudor portraits to lavish attention on sartorial detail, since clothing signified wealth and social position. In Bess’ case, however, it is tempting to see the portrait as a culmination of the Cavendish joint endeavor as portrayed in their *accounting* practices because these practices had a very specific meaning to Bess’ self-fashioning – perhaps of equal import to the clothes she wears in the painting. Entries in their accounts from the first years of their marriage, as Wiggins points out, actually list several items that could well be those we find in the portrait; Sir William’s payment of upwards of £27 for Bess’ clothing include eleven pounds for his “wyffe’s billymentes”, which could be the bejeweled headgear we see in the painting, for instance. William Cavendish died suddenly on October 13, 1557, leaving Bess with a large fine to pay (for his freewheeling handling of Crown finances), but also with many memories and many *things*, which all were preserved in the vellum books that accounted for their partnership. That she held onto these books for the rest of her life seems to indicate that they held some sort of special memorial value for her. In them, she could hold onto her husband, but also perhaps retain hold of the self that had unfolded in her writing. The portrait could well have performed a similar role. It was not simply that the objects, which Bess chose to wear in the painting and upon which the artist lavished so much attention, were valuable in a monetary sense. Though they were indeed valuable in this sense too, they were also a record of herself at a specific moment in time, during her marriage to Cavendish. The portrait’s *things* also memorialize that which the two of them had undertaken together. Though Cavendish is not physically *in* the painting—meaning we cannot truly call it a marriage portrait—he *is* there as part of their collaborative project of self-construction via the management of material goods. Moreover, he is also there in the sense that Bess’ self-possession (literalized in her long-term ownership of the portrait and the managerial skills she’d deploy so successfully in the future to acquire assets) was fostered in great part from what appears to have been a very collaborative, balanced, relationship with him.

The picture “table” of Bess (her fine portrait) was thus also deeply connected to the balanced tables that the Cavendishes set up to entertain and to record the details of their lives. It is in this nexus of accounting and self-fashioning through objects that invite detailed inspection that we can perhaps weave together several of the threads of analysis of the Eglantine table which have emerged in this chapter. Social distinction, based on the analysis of detail and an interest in trends, finds itself made manifest in the inlay technique itself, as we have observed. This technique, unobscured in the object by voluminous carving, draws attention to particular

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<sup>245</sup> Wiggins, 48. Bess would buy office and accounting supplies for her step-daughters as well, training them to follow in her footsteps as a responsible Tudor wife. Wiggins, 55.

details that highlight social matching as well as material value (expensive walnut and fruit wood). At the same time, however, the attention to detail itself corresponds aptly to the way in which Bess accounted for her world through a process of *viewing*, i.e. surveying objects as a network of relative values to be calculated and possessed. For instance, in 1565, shortly before her third husband William St. Loe's death, Bess found herself independently negotiating a land deal with Henry Babington for properties in Derbyshire. Bess wrote to him that she wanted "notes of the whole value of your lands, how much is assigned for jointure, or otherwise, which shall descend to your son immediately after you...so as I may understand truly your estate."<sup>246</sup> She did not want "counsel" from Babington; what she needed was detailed information about amounts, market values, and legal red tape in order to assess and make a gamble on the real estate.

This is a particular way of perceiving and ordering the world. It was not necessarily unusual (just as there were other inlay tables in England), but it certainly would have been a professional mode of viewing cultivated in this period by men rather than women. It was this type of valuing gaze that scans for details which, as I have proposed, Bess reflected back to herself through the production of ornate objects like the Eglantine that placed a premium on accumulated and embedded, but distinct, elements. She did not need to include "cookery" in her dining room in order to speak to "women's work" because Bess' work lay not only in providing for her home's appetite, but also in "viewing" a larger and finely detailed landscape in monetary terms.

We have also seen how producing a *table* on the occasion of a marriage would have been a potent symbolic marker of "joining" in the context of Tudor marriage and courtship practices, which highlighted rituals of reciprocity and balance between the marriage parties. Judging by their account books (there is little else to go on, unlike the voluminous correspondences that documented her rocky marriage with Shrewsbury), Bess and Sir William were truly "joined" like a well-joined *dormant*, whose parts grew and adjusted with each other over time. And the flower of their marital "yoke" (or, perhaps, friendship) seems to have blossomed more vividly thanks to their cooperation in managing their economic affairs; Bess' legs were integral to maintaining domestic balance (in a metaphoric and economic sense). So if the Eglantine can be located, or understood, in terms of how Bess became a place-maker with Cavendish, how do we square this with her role as a remarrying widow? We have seen how Mary Neville mobilized her portrait in ways that allowed her to occupy several roles: She was the devoted "good" widow and a "manly" woman intent on establishing a base (implied by her table) for her heirs by regaining the lands and titles lost by their father. One role did not exclude the other, and the former Lady Dacre was apparently adept when it came to manipulating role play.

The Eglantine table is somewhat more elusive in this regard. On one hand, it appears to commemorate Bess' family union with the Talbots. On the other hand, the central cartouche draws the viewer's attention away from the Shrewsbury half of the equation and toward the Cavendishes ("we staggess"). The paratactic vocabulary of the text and the ornament, however, open multiple combinatory possibilities. The Cavendishes combine with the Talbots, but their combination does not necessarily mean that Bess relinquished what she had achieved with her most beloved and formative relationship. That which she took from the relationship remained embedded in her possessions, in how they looked, and how she (literally) inscribed her way of looking into them—they were the coordinates for her *place* in a social and physical landscape. If Bess' "self" grew as a learning process in her second marriage, she need not relinquish it when

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<sup>246</sup> Hubbard, 79.

embarking on a fourth. Rather than cuckolding Cavendish, she digested his “appetite”, infused it with her own flair (and aesthetic preferences), and used the resulting combination as the base (literally a tabletop) upon which she hoped to pin their children’s futures through a further marriage.<sup>247</sup>

Loyalty is thus signified in two directions, one forward looking and the other memorializing, constituting a space *between*, just as the table acts as a materialization of a “betweenness”. Perhaps this betweenness, and Bess’ assertion of her own position in the equation is subtly reiterated by the positions of the male and female foxes that appear on the sides of the Eglantine’s central panel: the male fox uncharacteristically on the “female” left side and the female at right. In the case of this table, the embodied facilitation of potential proximities is both physical and temporal—physical because the table drew various parties to its top; and temporal because it also served as a stage for actions that would unfold upon its top in the future. As the game boards and cards on the Eglantine’s surface imply, the viewer can never truly anticipate how social arrangements will ultimately play out in the future, even though one might lay a solid foundation.

Indeed, two decades later the Shrewsbury marriage was famously in shambles. By August 1584, Bess and Talbot were irreconcilable. Shrewsbury wrote then to the Earl of Leicester that Bess and Cavendish’s son William had denied him entry to Chatsworth (*his* house, Talbot claimed) and had berated him lewdly, which is why he had decided to take William to court.<sup>248</sup> His wife, Shrewsbury claimed, had pressed him to give her rights to the properties that she had accrued with her earlier husbands Barlow, Cavendish, and St. Loe, which Talbot had allotted to Bess “in trust...for her benefit”.<sup>249</sup> Now, he fumed, she was greedily refusing him the access that was his, by right, as her husband. His actions thus were a matter of taking charge back by trying to rest her houses (and things). Before he sent the letter to Leicester, Talbot had already instructed his agents on the St. Loe properties to withhold rents owed to Bess and complained bitterly to William Cecil that Bess had departed from Chatsworth, taking all sorts of valuables with her, which were rightfully Talbot’s property. Did she take the Eglantine table, fleeing Shrewsbury’s men?

Before Burghley could respond, Talbot’s henchmen, led by his bailiff Nicolas Booth, went on a rampage: Charles Cavendish was ambushed and had to run for his life taking refuge in a church steeple (his manor was also attacked and his servants abused).<sup>250</sup> George Talbot himself then showed up at Chatsworth with forty armed men. Bess was already safely at Hardwick (in the Old Hall) but William was still there, barricaded inside. Shrewsbury forced the door, with Bess’ black sheep son Henry at his side, and his men took all the precious plate they could back to Talbot’s residence at Sheffield. William retaliated, taking back, in turn, what he could to Chatsworth.

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<sup>247</sup> Shrewsbury would hurl accusations of greed and “vain” spending at Bess frequently as their marriage degenerated, rehashing the gendered language of the day specifically in terms of her “appetite”, snarling for instance that Bess was a “devouring gulf of mine and other your husbands goods.” Cited Hubbard, 159. This trope is often repeated in the historiography of Bess’ story in which men, including some of her own descendants, characterized her as a shrewish, selfish, ruthless, greedy man-eater. Horace Walpole, famously rhymed, “Four times the nuptial bed she warmed,/And every time so well performed,/That when death spoiled each husband’s billing/He left the widow every shilling.” Cited Lovell, xiv. The sixth Duke of Devonshire described her as “hideous, dry, parched, narrow-minded, but my prudent, amassing, calculating buildress and progenitrix.” Hubbard, 2.

<sup>248</sup> Lovell, 308.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid, 308.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid, 309.

The feud between Bess and Shrewsbury was never resolved. But in the midst of these epic nuptial struggles, Bess appears to have ended up dragging the heavy Eglantine table to Hardwick, where she first had it installed in the Old Hall and later moved it to the New Hall once that house was ready. There she left it to her son William (of the plate incident), stipulating in her will that none of the house's furnishings should be moved, and certainly not sold ("in suche manner and forme as my ffurniture of houshold stuffe at my howse or howses at Hardwicke stand hereafter by theise presents entailed").<sup>251</sup> Bess had created hundreds of "heirlooms" out of her possessions, that is, a legally inalienable "part of the freehold property, which could not be treated as a realisable asset."<sup>252</sup> Given Bess' interest in changing fashions and permutation as an aesthetic strategy, that she willed her possessions to stay in place forever would seem to be an apparent contradiction, yet the desire for stasis also indicated the strength of Bess' conviction: her things constituted her place in the world, and a place for her children with Sir William Cavendish.

Even in death, each of these things needed to be fully accounted for. The table made on the occasion of the Cavendish alliance with the Talbots thus ultimately belonged to her, and it far outlasted the harmonious baked capon era of her marriage to Shrewsbury. Perhaps, to draw on Talbot's words, she was not "remembering of" him, but rather, in her table, remembering of Sir William and herself. Looking out from the Great High Chamber where the Eglantine table likely stood and continues to stand, Bess and her Cavendish heirs could survey a landscape that they had successfully accrued through a process of hard-won accretion: to the West lay Chatsworth and Owlcoates (a house Bess had built by Smythson for William and his family), slightly to the north lay Bolsover, which Bess' son Charles purchased from Shrewsbury's heir Gilbert, while to the South in Nottinghamshire lay lands that Bess had gained for her granddaughter Arbella Stuart from a shrewd deal with Sir Francis Willoughby (whose spectacular house at Wollaton she had also one-upped at Hardwick with the new design she'd developed with Willoughby's surveyor Robert Smythson). Notwithstanding her ongoing fights with Gilbert Talbot and her daughter Mary, Bess could also rest assured that the Shrewsbury properties like Wingfield and Sheffield would ultimately end up in their hands, providing income and status for her grandchildren. In between, under constant oversight, lay an empire of smaller properties, coal mines, iron forging operations, glass making outfits, and other money-generating prospects that Bess owned, operated, or enjoyed lifetime privileges in. At Hardwick, her birthplace and the center of this field of operations, stood the Eglantine table, marking the place, her place, from which she could best "view" the network of details that she had so assiduously begun accounting for all those years ago.

## Conclusion: On Top

We have now seen several specific and interlocking ways in which Bess may have thought of her table as somehow representative of *herself*, not simply reflecting her values and interests, but actually *standing in for her*: the object can be understood as literally embodying her

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<sup>251</sup> Ibid, 70. In her will, Bess wrote further, "in the tyme of my approaching Departure out of this transitorye worlde as also for to prevent all sutes Debates and controuersies that other wise mighte arise or be moued amongst my children whome I most cheifelie desire and hartelie praye to liue in all unitie and natural affection: and withal to quett setle and contynue the possessions of all suche Jewells plate furniture of houshold Debtes goodes and chattels as god of his most gracious goodness hath vouchsafed to bestowe on me." Ibid, 67.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid, 70.

social ambitions and acting as a connective device that positioned her in relation to husbands dead and alive, to places here (and there), and to an economic and social network that radiated outward from her home and included her children (and their children, down the line). The table was not simply an object, but part of a life with which it intertwined: a life (and dynasty) that was designed to last. We no longer make furniture like this, commissioned for specific occasions like a marriage. Objects now pass in and out of our life worlds in a different way. But Bess' table was not simply an accoutrement, or accessory to self-fashioning. It was, as we have seen, perhaps somehow *more*, both an object with use value, as well as one steeped with social and commemorative significance. It was a means of articulating the story of the establishment and maintenance of her *place* in the world. Bess seems to have held onto several objects of this sort throughout her life. Inventories of Chatsworth made around the time that the Eglantine table was produced (1565 and 1656) record, for example, that in her bedroom Bess kept three portraits (noted as “tables” in the inventory), one of William Cavendish, one of William St. Loe, and one of “my Lady Jane” (Grey). The paintings were hung with silk, so that they could be protected (just as a quality table like the Eglantine would have been covered, frequently with “turkey” work) and also dramatically revealed to Bess' guests. Like a gold and agate jewel that Lady Jane's mother Frances had given her back in those heady London days, these objects did not only serve as private reminders of important stations in her life.<sup>253</sup> They also provided a kind of public archive that others could behold too, an archive that mapped the denouement of Bess' biography into her home where these objects shared space with other material possessions – some newly acquired like the Eglantine table – to furnish an ongoing portrait of Bess articulated through her “household stuff.” Revealing the portraits by pulling aside their silk veils, or wearing the ring perhaps added a further dimension to the otherwise still archive: these effigies (and with them the people they represented) came alive, or at least remained lively.

Anticipating her own death, Bess tried as well to mandate her own continued presence, ordering that her possessions remain *in situ*, for eternity. In doing so, she transformed her belongings into memorials to herself; she and her things would serve as a literal base, or stage upon which her descendants would act out their lives.<sup>254</sup> This act aimed to ensure that the *place* she had made remained hers, rather than becoming a multi-valent “space.” For the will to permanence aimed to make things *still*, to anchor them so that they could not move, to make certain that they would only be occupied by a single person; to make sure that they would be *owned*. This is what place-making, at least etymologically, was about from the beginning. The Indo-Germanic root word for what in English would be known as a “stead” or a “steald”, as in a homestead (or a bedstead) is directly related to the German word, still in use, for “to place”, i.e. *stellen* (as in, to place an object on a table, or a table in a room, or a house on a hill).<sup>255</sup> The word “stel” (also a progenitor for the word “still” as in still life, and *stellen*) indicates both a quietness as well as the act and marker of a place, or “*stell*” that is a “standing” or a stall, as in a horse stall. Such a stall is a zone marked off by posts (*stele*), a roped off place where animals would rest for the night (just as a bedstead is a place where people sleep, marked off by poles extending upward).<sup>256</sup> These are *places*, again, defined by relative permanence in relation to a changing

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<sup>253</sup> Lovell, 193.

<sup>254</sup> See Jessica L. Malay, “Elizabeth Hardwick's material negotiations” in Lisa Hopkins ed. *Bess of Hardwick: new Perspectives* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019) 142-158.

<sup>255</sup> Karin Leonhard, “Still Stil(l)eben: Ein Versuch, nicht zuletzt über Stoskopff in *Silence. Schweigen: Über die stumme Praxis der Kunst*, eds. Andreas Beyer and Laurent Le Bon (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2015), 102-104.

<sup>256</sup> See *Ibid.*

environmental *space* around it, a definition articulated in terms of the contrast between verticality and horizontality, stasis and movement. The upright place announces that it is where one has stopped, become still, and made a proprietary claim. Expanded into a social meaning, this place in turn conflates with the notion (and etymology) of *standing*, a status whose stability reinforces itself through a certain *stillness*, or apparent permanence in relation to a social landscape from which it stands out and makes itself identifiable. So too did Bess' table stand, and it stood next to one of the uppermost windows in her house at Hardwick, which brings us back in conclusion to the question of the view.

What did it mean that her dormant stood on the third floor at a window instead of in the hall, where a long table should be? As we have seen, the hall on the ground floor of an English manor house (and in the royal palaces) was traditionally *the* space that advertised a lord's hospitality and made his connection to his community visible. That was where his table stood, upon the raised dais at the end of the room. But the architecture of the wealthy English country house was changing dramatically during the sixteenth century. The lord and his family had already begun retreating from the hall already by the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, moving into progressively more reclusive spaces to eat and socialize in greater seclusion.<sup>257</sup> First, they moved to the solar, or chamber, which was often upstairs from the hall and might include a bed as well as table. Then they moved to parlors and chambers further and further away from the ground floor Hall, although they did leave their dormant table there as a proxy, supervised by a chief steward, or another high ranking member of the lord's retinue. In the Great Hall at Hardwick, for example, there were still three long tables and six forms and a cupboard there under a plasterwork frieze featuring the Cavendish and Hardwick stags with eglantine roses. These were not embedded into the table, as in the one upstairs, but were prominently placed on view over the *dormant* where they were the first thing that those entering the hall would see. Figs. 26-27 Instead of seeing Bess, one saw her "sign" and her table, but she was conspicuously absent, having retreated for meals to a "dining Chamber" with a draw table (a smaller table with extendable "leaves") instead of a long one and an impressive chair covered in Turkey work for Bess, a Turkey work covered stool (perhaps for Lady Arbella, her unhappy granddaughter), and fourteen other unembellished simple joined stools for those in the household who were important enough to enjoy proximity to the countess, but interchangeable enough not to have assigned seats in this "little" room.<sup>258</sup>

Briefly stated, houses like Bess' had begun to detach, or dis-embed themselves from their surroundings in specific ways. One aspect – the most obvious – was physical: these "prodigy" houses were conspicuously tall. Before the mid-sixteenth century, important manor houses in England had been "inward" looking, which is to say, they were organized around one or more courtyards, which kept the focus of the manorial structure horizontal: on the ground. These houses tended not to have much fenestration and they were not especially *visibly permeable* like prodigy houses, whose walls tended to be filled with expensive glass ("Hardwick Hall, more window than wall" went the adage).<sup>259</sup> Instead, they were permeable in other ways. These kinds of houses tended to be embedded in the center of working farms, surrounded by collections of outlying service buildings. There was – thinking with de Certeau – a certain type of spatial

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<sup>257</sup> See e.g. Beard, 480 and Girouard (1978), see also Andor Gomme and Alison Maguire, *Design and Plan in the Country House: from Castle Donjons to Palladian Boxes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

<sup>258</sup> Peter Thornton, "A short commentary on the Hardwick Inventory of 1601", *Furniture History*, Vol. 7 (1971), 15-40.

<sup>259</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *A History of Building Types* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), 324.



ambiguity in such conglomerations, which had generally been built hodge-podge over time. For the house was conjoined to the estate and to the land through a fluid multifunctional architecture, which located service, labor, and lord in one classed, but relatively open “space.” At Wollaton Old Hall, for example, Sir Francis Willoughby had penned very specific instructions in order to try to institute an order – to turn space into place – but the very fact that he had to write instructions speaks volumes: the space itself did not delineate certain forms of group behavior. Thus Willoughby needed his gentleman usher Robert Fox to oversee the activities on the ground floor, particularly in the great hall through which all visitors and servants would pass. Fox would patrol these zones of the house with a “little fine rod” that he carried with him, making sure that everyone behaved, that dogs stayed outside, and that nobody made off with valuable plate (obviously his rod was a mobile *stele*).<sup>260</sup> Passage, here as in other traditional manor houses, was thus relatively fluid and a narrative needed to be constructed and enacted to delimit it – a narrative performed by players like Fox – because the architecture did not exert unmitigated or independent authority.<sup>261</sup>

Outside on the land surrounding the manner, things were similarly permeable. Just as the household traditionally gathered in the hall, so too were fields farmed traditionally in an open-field system (though this clearly differed based on regional types of agriculture and land use).<sup>262</sup> In terms of marking property, Maurice Beresford has evocatively described how early modern boundary laying in England was principally a performative and oral affair. Instead of using drawings, or maps, communities would assemble together in England to hold a rogation ceremony, a term that indicates a procession around the edges of the parish.<sup>263</sup> Though there were of course written boundary charters going back to the Anglo-Saxon era, the borders of estates and towns tended to be defined by this kind of communal form of narrative and performative visualization. Reliance on these performances meant that one could not simply purchase a manor and its lands *as* a piece of paper (as one does today because property boundaries are considered synonymous with a map).<sup>264</sup> For property was not yet construed as analogous to an abstraction laid out (and measured) on paper, visible at one glance. Instead, narrative processions, or court processes, depended on witness testimony that could take days to speak aloud and render visible. Maps might be used to present information to a tribunal, court, or

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<sup>260</sup> Friedman (1989), 42.

<sup>261</sup> At Wollaton Old Hall, for instance, the manor complex included outlying dog kennels, a joiner’s workshop, a blacksmith’s shop, barns for storing grains, a mill, a malthouse, a brewery, a bakehouse, a coal yard, a wool house, a cider mill, a pigeon house, a swine yard, a house for ducks and geese, a dairy, and a stream with a sluice to water the horses. The materiality of these structures there was as varied as their functions, and it was in this environment that varying ranks of servants and the family circulated relatively unhindered in and out. The most complete accounts of the Old Wollaton are provided in J.H. Hodson, ‘The First Wollaton Hall.’ *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire* vol. LXXII (1968): 59-68 and Friedman (1989), 38-41.

<sup>262</sup> Joan Thirsk, *The Rural Economy of England: Collected Essays* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), 35-84.

<sup>263</sup> Maurice Beresford, *History on the Ground: Six Studies in Maps and Landscapes* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1957), 23-62.

<sup>264</sup> Alain Pottage has observed, this facile equation of property with the visual dynamics of mapping is a recent phenomenon. In Britain, for instance, it was only in the first two decades of the twentieth century that a nation-wide system of property registration, conjoined to highly detailed scaled mapping, came to fully equate property with printed cartography. Prior to that time, a mixture of oral testimony and narrative visual inspection (a process known as “conveyance”) was deployed in order to assign a contracted (rather than absolute) value to an estate, or property. Pottage points out that the 1925 Land Registration Act (which built upon an 1897 predecessor) marked the definitive turning point in this process. Pottage, Alain. “The Measure of Land.” *The Modern Law Review* 57, no. 3 (1994): 361-384.

other decision-making entity, but they did not entirely replace narrative testimony, often given *in situ*.<sup>265</sup>

This performative practice found a reflection, in some ways, in the space of the hall and the ground floor of the manor house with their relative social permeability.<sup>266</sup> If house walls were thick and generally not punctured by windows, in other ways they were quite porous. Over the course of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, this socio-architectural model had decisively shifted. The trend that had been building toward a greater separation of the lord and his family from the rest of the household solidified. And this separation began to express itself in terms of height: the retreat of the family into growing intimacy was one that moved upward vertically toward the sky. In the home, rank began to express itself more specifically in terms of who was allowed access to spaces *above* the ground. The Great Hall never disappeared, its symbolism was apparently too weighty to reject completely, but its position was diminished. As the Lord left the Hall, its space became increasingly associated with the laboring aspects of an estate whereas the upper, more exclusive entertaining rooms (like Hardwick's High Great Chamber) in a country house were given over to leisure enjoyed in a smaller and more socially homogeneous circles. These rooms were very conspicuously demarcated from the service areas below, so that social hierarchy became mapped into the very architecture of the house itself.<sup>267</sup>

In terms of serving food, this was not terribly practical, since it meant that servants needed to bring food farther away from the kitchen, up several flights of stairs. But the social importance of this separation clearly overrode concerns about meals getting cold. What mattered was that everyone could see the food going upstairs, but nobody in the Hall could see the lord (although everyone know that he or she was there, being served). Access meant everything; what was visually elusive was visually – and socially – exclusive. Crucially, this elusive exclusivity needed to be put on display in order to be meaningful. Elizabethan houses like Hardwick thus were structured in a manner that advertised retreat. For example, at Hardwick, Bess and Smythson came up with a design whose exterior broadcast the fact that the upper floors were more important socially. They did this by making the upper floor higher than the lower floors, so that when one looks at the building from the outside, one can clearly see that the people inhabiting the upper floor occupy more generous portions of space and are, thus, more important than those below, who they literally look down upon. Fig. 28 One couldn't really see through the myriad panes of glass in those upper floors, but one has a sense at Hardwick that the occupants of the floors with large amounts of windows enjoyed a *kind* of permeable visual access to the surroundings below (at the very least, sunlight was able to pass, heightening visibility indoors).<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid. and P.D.A. Harvey, "English Estate Maps: Their Early History and Their Use as Historical Evidence" in *Rural Images: Estate Maps in the Old and New Worlds*, ed. David Buisseret (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 27–62 and P.D.A. Harvey, *Maps in Tudor England* (London: British Library, 1993), 102–117. See also Peter Barber, "England I: Pageantry, Defense, and Government: Maps at Court to 1550" and Barber, "England II: Monarchs, Ministers, and Maps, 1550-1625" in *Monarchs, Ministers and Maps: the Emergence of Cartography as a Tool of Government in Early Modern Europe*, ed. David Buisseret (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 26–98.

<sup>266</sup> See Matthew Johnson, *An Archaeology of Capitalism. Social Archaeology* (Oxford, UK & Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

<sup>267</sup> See Friedman (1989), 135-154 on Wollaton Hall and White, 29-64 on Hardwick Hall.

<sup>268</sup> On the use of glass in English Renaissance architecture see Morgan Ng, "Toward a Cultural Ecology of Architectural Glass in Early Modern Northern Europe, *Art History* 40, no. 3 (2017), 496–525.

Moreover, as numerous commentators on Hardwick's architecture have observed, there is something dizzying, or a bit confusing (not to mention dazzling) about the building's proportions and the distribution of the roofline Banqueting chambers. Sacheverell Sitwell wrote, for example, that Hardwick New Hall's turrets, mysteriously group and regroup themselves according to the position from which they are viewed below "as though the building is shaped like a diamond on a playing card, more still, like the ace of clubs, so that the fourth tower is hidden, almost, behind the other three."<sup>269</sup> In this way, the upper floors appear to perceptually detach themselves from the world below, spinning as though they are operating according to a mysterious logic of their own; the beholder on the ground can apprehend only that those above resist being seen (like the elusive fourth tower that evades our gaze), while at the same time being made aware of the fact that those above seem to have a more stable and exact "view" of the ground below than the "ground-lings" have of those above.

At Wollaton, Smythson and Willoughby did something similar, installing a gigantic banqueting, or prospect room, on top of the roof that ballooned over the house and was visible from miles away. In this manner, command of the view was flaunted, while the commander was increasingly hard to apprehend (in Fig. 29, a 17<sup>th</sup>-century painting by Jan Siberechts made after landscape had established itself as a genre we get a good sense of the relative positions of the Old and New Halls at Wollaton, with the latter looming on the hill above like a shiny Foucauldian panopticon). Cloaked behind glittering surfaces of windows and ornament, the landowner demonstrated the fact that s/he could see everyone else, but few could see him or her. The Elizabethan prodigy house, with its increasing numbers of prospect rooms, banqueting towers, and expanses of glass thereby inverted the traditional structure of the English manor house in a way that prioritized showing off one's command of the prospect, or view, over the environment.<sup>270</sup>

At Hardwick New Hall, Bess had the chance to design a building completely from scratch. This must have been exciting. Unlike her previous building efforts at Chatsworth and Hardwick Old Hall, the new project offered a tabula rasa, a chance to independently build a portrait of herself onto her property.<sup>271</sup> There was no preexisting building, no courtyard which needed to be taken into account. Thus the design she developed with Smythson was one that dramatically accentuated the development of an increasingly vertical and compact architecture.

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<sup>269</sup> Cited in Girouard (1983), 222.

<sup>270</sup> The same was true indoors as well, where "squints" (indoor windows) afforded those above a kind of panoptic view into spaces below, and landings on stairwells tended to demarcate social thresholds in terms of architecture spaces of waiting: who is selected to progress upward? The others must wait. At Hardwick, these landing spaces were filled with impermanent furniture- folding tables and even beds. Servants must have set up camp in rooms once the rest of the household, with fixed places to sleep, had gone to bed. Fig. 31

<sup>271</sup> She began construction shortly before Shrewsbury died, but while it was perhaps clear to her that he was in ill health and would probably not be around to harangue her for much longer. At Hardwick she, thus, not only had the chance to build a house on a blank slate, but also to build one likely to make a personal statement without the troubling interference of her estranged fourth husband. He, in turn, had already designed and built a house with Smythson at Worksop, an old hunting lodge that has since burned down. Worksop's principle characteristic was its height, including a ninety foot parapet, with still higher turrets. It was a compact house, like the other Smythson works, encircled by generous bands of windows. It was essentially a fortress with extraordinary views, even its domed turrets had circular glass walls to overlook the hunt and forests below. The 212 foot long gallery was unprecedented, and was walled on three sides by glass. Robert Cecil wrote to Gilbert Talbot in 1590 that it was "the fairest gallery in England". Cited in Hubbard, 159. For a man who constantly complained about being strapped for money, the expenditure must have been a tough pill to swallow, but must also have been worth it. If one were to hazard a guess, it seems likely that the value, for Talbot, lay in competing both with Francis Willoughby at Wollaton, and with his wife's work at Chatsworth.

She arranged all the service elements of the household concentrated in the ground floor, while shifting the orientation of the Great Hall so that one entered the room on access, instead of from the side. Fig. 30 This meant that one came face to face with her heraldry, but immediately became aware that the room was simply one of passage for those whose status allowed them to move upward. Service was here on the ground, to the sides of the hall, in the kitchens and butteries. As one moved upward space became more exclusive and explicitly separated from labor, which became invisible as it was buried below (at Wollaton, Smythson had gone as far as to sink service buildings like the dairy and the kitchens underground).<sup>272</sup> Fig. 32 The nature of the Hardwick Great Hall primarily as a site of *passage* can perhaps be apprehended in the fact that the 1601 inventory records three long tables, six accompanying forms, but no seat furniture. If the upper household had dined and entertained there on a regular basis, there would have been chairs and stools that remained in the Hall permanently. Instead, it would seem that there were probably only benches that could be set up and removed quickly.

Moving past the hall, the visitor was drawn ineluctably up the stairs (if one were allowed) to the first floor, where Bess' chambers were located, as well as the Low Great Chamber and the previously mentioned small "dying Chamber".<sup>273</sup> Upper servants could assemble in the Low Great Chamber. These were members of Bess' family, and other estate agents who filled important roles, like Bess' principle manager Timothy Pusey. In this space we find the usual long table and two square tables, as well as a cupboard (probably outfitted with two shelves, since the inventory designates two table-covers, or "carpets" for it).<sup>274</sup> Here the upper servants, employees, and kinfolk – or those Bess would have referred to in familiar terms in her accounts – would dine and entertain themselves over cards and other games. The high concentration of various inventoried seating furniture (from upholstered chairs to joined stools) in this space indicates that while there was a sitting arrangement based on status hierarchy, there were still plenty of opportunities for many people to repose simultaneously, so that we can assume that it was a space in which rules could be somewhat more relaxed thanks to social homogeneity: strict precedence was less important to articulate because there was less social difference in the body of people gathered regularly in the chamber compared to the Hall below.<sup>275</sup>

The march upward did not stop in the Lower chambers, as the term "lower" indicates. It continued, to the third floor, where the Upper Great Chamber and the Eglantine table were located. These rooms were designed for entertaining the highest social strata – perhaps the Queen herself, an invitation that Bess built into the chamber's staging by incorporating Queen Elizabeth's symbolism in the room's plasterwork.<sup>276</sup> Here, nearby the Eglantine table, there was one upholstered chair, which clearly was meant for Bess (in the absence of the Queen, of course, who in any event never came to visit). The adjacent "with drawing Chamber" also had one such permanent chair, indicating Bess' status as the unique holder of Hardwick as a *place*.<sup>277</sup> The High Great Chamber was, thus, a kind of upwardly mobile outgrowth of the Hall below. The

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<sup>272</sup> Smith, Pete. "The Sundial Garden and House-Plan Mount: Two Gardens at Wollaton Hall, Nottinghamshire, by Robert (c. 1535-1614) and John (-1634) Smythson." *Garden History* 31, no. 1 (2003): 1-28.

<sup>273</sup> See Thornton, 19 on the furnishings here and White, 140.

<sup>274</sup> Thornton, 20.

<sup>275</sup> White, 140.

<sup>276</sup> M. Jourdain, "Plasterwork at Hardwick Hall." *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 49, no. 284 (1926), 233-34.

<sup>277</sup> "...an inlayde table in the windowe, a Cubberd guilt and Carved with tills, a Chare of nedlework with golde and silk frenge, a foote Carpet of turkie worke, a footestoole of watchet velvet with blewe silk fringe". The footstool and foot carpet highlight the social position of the sitter, whose feet are even elevated." Thornton, 27.

portraits that decorated it announced the type of exclusive society that belonged on top, physically separated and vaulted above the rest: “Pictures of King Henry the Eight, Quene Elizabeth, Quene Marie, Edward the sixt, Duke Dolva, Charles the Emporer, Cardinal Woolsey, Cardinall Poole, Stephen Gardener.”[sic]<sup>278</sup> This room, on top of the house, was the ultimate showplace for Bess’ social ambitions; the buck stopped here.

Bess herself was not present as a picture, nor were her husbands, though she, Cavendish, and Talbot were wrapped into the display through the table. Thus rather than appearing as a static image, Bess’ marriages provided a gathering point in the room (the table as a social hub) while she could also apprehend her own visage, and those of her *invités*, in a “looking glass paynted about with the Armes of England” that also hung in the Chamber. The mirror projected portraits back at those beholders invited up the stairs while placing them (around the table) among a picture gallery of those who had ruled England since Henry VIII - notably the room also contained images of the four parts of the world, implying that ruling England was equivalent to mastery over the world at large.<sup>279</sup> These were the faces that Bess intimated *ought* to gather around her table, looking downward at its distinguished and distinguishing details. In this manner, Bess displayed her status on top, a (vertical) standing shared only by the most illustrious company; the removal of the most elaborate dormant table and the most elaborately upholstered chair away from the service areas of the house (and the ground outside) to the airy space of luxurious entertaining among members of the same – ruling – class upstairs indicates how the processes of social distinction that we analyzed as being embedded in the visual logic of the Eglantine table found a match in the design of Bess’ home. The frame, or base of the Eglantine table was translated, and expanded, into the architectural structure of the house that she built to commemorate herself. From this exalted zone, one could move even farther upward still at Hardwick, exiting the building out onto the roof, where a view Derbyshire unfolded on all sides. In this way, one was given to understand that while in the High Great Chamber, the upper echelons of Bess’ social world could apprehend each other, from the roof they could apprehend the world that lay at their feet. Or rather, they could see what Bess possessed from the Countess’ perspective: Mounted upon each viewing turret were her initials and the sign of her countess’ coronet carved in stone.

Contemporaries frequently remarked upon this Elizabethan predilection for verticality in elite the country homes built in the latter half of the century. They generally highlighted the view at the top as a moment of aesthetic delight, for it revealed the cleverness of the house (and owner), which only became fully clear when one ascended to the top and could make out how each part of the “device” functioned in relation to the whole (the rest of the household remained in the proverbial woods, downstairs). The illumination implied in reaching the top of the home was both literal (sun, windows) and metaphorical (knowledge unlocked). When William Cecil went to Christopher Hatton’s house Holdenby, for example, he described his experience as follows, “approaching to the house, being led by a large, long, straight fair way, I found a great magnificence in the front or front pieces of the house, and so every part answerable to other, to allure liking. I found no one thing of greater grace than your stately ascent from your hall to your great chamber; and your chamber answerable with largeness and lightsomeness, that truly a Momus could find no fault.”<sup>280</sup> Pulled (“lured” perhaps), Burghley is drawn into Hatton’s device,

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<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> For an extensive analysis of this quote see James Sutton, *Materializing Space At An Early Modern Prodigy House: The Cecils at Theobalds, 1564-1607* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

admiring how the parts of the home “answer” to one another, so that the architecture becomes a means of unifying that which is seemingly disparate (“every part”). The home’s architecture glues *variety* together, making it into a pleasure that one enjoys especially while ascending from the Hall to the great, large and light, chamber above. The house, if one thinks like Burghley in terms of allure, entraps the visitor and then frees s/him with a frisson of delight by revealing the trap’s design (its artifice) when one reaches the top. In his own home at Theobalds, Cecil created a private maze garden for the education of his son Robert, which could be viewed from an open loggia above (the *Green Gallery*); in this manner one could practice applying knowledge gained from above when one found oneself down below.<sup>281</sup>

In *Arcadia*, Philip Sydney’s description of Basilius’ lodge is similar, though Sidney explicitly describes the gaze from above in terms of the production of aesthetic artificiality (again, like Spenser’s rose arbor in the *Faerie Queen*): “Truly a place for pleasantness, not unfit to flatter solitariness, for, it being set upon such an insensible rising of the ground as you are come to a pretty height before almost you perceive that you ascent, it gives the eye lordship over a good large circuit, which according to the nature of the country, being diversified between hills and dales, woods and planes, one place more clear, another more darksome, it seems a pleasant *picture* of nature.”<sup>282</sup> The view from the top has become a picture, or table (in the word’s double sense), from which the Lord can pluck various delights, if not resources – as Walter Raleigh would imply in his *Discovery of Guiana* (1596):

I never saw a more beawtiffull country, nor more lievely prospectes, hils so raised here and there over the vallies, the river winding into divers braunches, the plaines adjoining without bush or stuffle, all faire greene grasse, the ground of hard sand easy to march on, eyther for horse or foote, the deare crossing in every path, the birds towards the evening singing on every tree with a thousand several tunes, cranes and herons of white, crimson, and carnation pearching on the rivers side, the ayre fresh with a gentle easterlie wind, and *every stone that we stooped to take up, promised eyther gold or silver* by his complexion.<sup>283</sup> Here, the landscape view explicitly becomes a means of extracting monetary value as part of an aesthetic experience.

The idea of the world as a *picture* (or “table”), depicted from above draws our attention back to the “view” as a process of surveying in terms of taking stock and assessing value. It is tempting, perhaps, to see this specific facet of “landscape” in relation to global expansion. And certainly both Bess and Shrewsbury were acquisitive and interested in procuring objects from abroad: Bess appears to have commissioned an Ushak carpet, for instance, with her coat of arms embroidered in gold and silver thread, and her inventory indicates that she purchased imported European silks for furnishing Hardwick, as well as Anatolian carpets, Gujarati bedcovers, Bengali quilts, and Chinese woven silk damask for cushions.<sup>284</sup> Shrewsbury was for a time involved with shipping (one of which, *The Talbotte*, became a privateering ship and sailed twice to Newfoundland).<sup>285</sup> While travel was perhaps not especially easy to and from Derbyshire, Bess

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<sup>281</sup> Ibid, 61

<sup>282</sup> Cited in Girouard (1983), 20.

<sup>283</sup> Walter Raleigh, *The Discovery of the Large Rich and Bewtiful Empire of Guiana* (1596), ed. V.T. Harlow (London: Argonaut Press, 1928), 54-55. Emphasis mine.

<sup>284</sup> Wiggins (2017) 155-157. The Urshak carpet is mentioned in Kurt Erdmann, *Seven Hundred Years of Oriental Carpets* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 207.

<sup>285</sup> The earl’s other ships brought his lead – worked with new water-powered smelting – to ports around England and France. The boats would stop at the four smelting mills, continue to his storehouse at Bawtry (inland), then via river to Hull, then to London, Hamburg, or Rouen, where they would deposit the metal and pick up wine and silk. He also did business with Sir Richard Staper and Sir Edward Osborne, two London merchants involved in the

nonetheless stood at the center of an extensive network of communication, primarily ordered around circulating goods and money – but also politics at court as well as abroad.<sup>286</sup> Keeping up with national and international politics was not merely a matter of entertainment value. For people involved in business at the scale of both the Earl and Bess, both political and social information (gossip) was the key to maintaining and expanding their financial reach; the exchange of news was a crucial part of the patronage system, with letters acting as gifts, or otherwise as signs of interconnection, patronage, loyalty and obligation.<sup>287</sup> Bess' position depended on keeping tabs on an incessantly shifting tableau of things, places, and people, which was subject to frequent (and unexpected) changes. This was a task she accomplished by maintaining a voluminous written correspondence with an ever expanding network of interlinked friends and relations – a network that grew and solidified in no small part thanks to the interlaced heraldic “joinings” (i.e. marriages) featured in the Eglantine (her sons and sons-in-law were crucial to Bess' news network, as were friends like Frances Cobham and Burghley).

We ought not, however, to let our current interest in the “global” occlude the fact, however, that Bess' interests were much more intensively local than international. While she was acquisitive and enjoyed foreign textiles especially (or so her 1601 inventory would indicate), as the center of a quite vast business empire with outposts around England, Bess was most interested in the extraction and trade of very localized resources.

When she stood above her house, she not only gazed out at the estates of her children, as we mentioned before, but also at properties belonging to her. In a sense, this picture offered a kind of cartographic view of that which in her accounts appears as a list. She would have been well aware of the specific localities around her from where she extracted the resources used to build her home *cum* viewing platform. Looking toward Sheffield (where Gilbert and Mary assumed the Shrewsbury Earldom after George Talbot's death in 1590), Bess would have thought of the Talbot iron furnaces and forges, which by the early 1590s when Hardwick New Hall was rising produced up to 160 tons of bar iron a year, not to mention the steelworks where the Shrewsburys were furnishing the burgeoning Sheffield cutlery trade with raw material, yielding a cash profit of 200–400 pounds annually.<sup>288</sup> She would also have discerned the smaller localities that provided the construction materials for her home itself, which were all sourced within a ca. twenty mile radius from Hardwick: limestone from a quarry at Hardwick (now disappeared), iron from her blast furnaces and glass from her glassworks at South Wingfield, timber from Heath and Stainsby, lime from Skegby and Crich, alabaster from Creswell, lead from Winster, Aldward, and Bonsall, slate from Whittington, East Moor, Walton Old Hay, and Walton Spring, black marble from Ashford, gypsum from Tutbury, and seventy-three cartloads of timber dragged by oxen over muddy paths from Pentrich, eight miles down the road.<sup>289</sup> Like

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Levant trade. A letter from Osborne to Talbot in 1585 announces the arrival of a ship from Turkey carrying carpets and nutmeg. William Cavendish Jr. was involved in the East India company from its founding and Henry Cavendish traveled in 1589 to Istanbul, perhaps at Bess' bidding to ship pepper and explore other business possibilities. *Ibid.*, see also Hubbard, 85–86 and Santina Levey, *An Elizabethan Inheritance: The Hardwick Hall Textiles* (London: National Trust, 1998), 26–29.

<sup>286</sup> On her correspondence networks see Wiggins (2017) and James Daybell, “‘Suche newes as on the Quenes hie ways we have mett’: the News and Intelligence Networks of Elizabeth Talbot, countess of Shrewsbury (c. 1527–1608)” in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450–1700*, ed. James Daybell (London: Routledge, 2016), 114–131.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>288</sup> Hubbard, 86.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 199. Locally sourced materials kept Bess' construction costs relatively low. When it came to food, much was purchased by the kitchen clerk William Jenkinson locally: from Hull came “herrings, salt salmons, oysters,

the table, the house's frame (its architectural plan) served as joinery to bring together resources and labor that needed to be accounted for and secured. Once everything was lodged into place, Bess could climb up top and survey the means by which the picture had been made: she built herself a view.

One ought to emphasize that, of course, all houses integrate disparate materials, providing a frame and a foundation for them. What is particular about Bess' construction project, however, is that she was intimately involved in sourcing the materials used to build it; she knew the places the materials came from, as well as their value, and she kept track of each element just as she had trained herself to do with her London household accounts. The production of her home can thus be understood as serving a kind of analogous purpose as the account books (with their "social cartography") in terms of materializing a network with both social and spatial dimensions around her person. And just as the Eglantine table and the account books manifest similarities, so too do the table and the house, each of which prioritize similar modes of viewing.

By the 1590s in England, this type of "view" actually found its closest visual analog in new types of maps (rather than in landscape painting, which would first come into its own in the following century, notably in portraits of the kinds of high viewing machines that were country homes like Wollaton or Hardwick). Estate maps and county maps of the sort famously produced by the surveyor Christopher Saxton in the 1570s offered Englishmen and women an image of the world – well-measured and in scaled proportion – that they inhabited from above for the first time.<sup>290</sup> For surveyors working for large estates like Hardwick, the benefit of these kinds of maps was the provision of an overview, based on trigonometric measurements, which purported to ensure accuracy. As the surveyor Ralph Agas wrote, "Heere have you also every parcel ready measured, to all purposes: you may also see upon the same, how conveniently this or that ground my be lays to this or that tenement or messuage, aswel in reard of waies, water, cloud, or otherwise: which is a thing much helping and conducing to a partition, or division of such manner, or Lordship."<sup>291</sup> Maps, he suggests, are not only accurate ("ready measured") but conveniently offer a Lord a view of his property as if on a platter. Whereas earlier in the century, surveying manuals like John Fitzherbert's *Book of Surveying* (1531) described the surveying process as one in which the surveyor dragged waxed rope or chains between poles while "extending" and "treading out" the open fields, Agas' surveyor was making use of new technologies that allowed the him to measure estates without actually needing to "tread" all over them.<sup>292</sup> The narrative accounting for an estate was becoming replaced by an object that offered an overview, which was easier to grasp quickly (the image of a Lord leaning over a table "mapp" reminds us, perhaps, of Raleigh stooping over the unfolding view in Guiana and picking up

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stockfish, sturgeon, salad oil, sprats, eels, hops, bay salt, 'a topknot' of figs, sack, 'gasgone' wine, hogsheads of claret, firkins of soap, cod and sprats" all of which were sent by boat on the Trent to Stockwith, before continuing up the Idle (river) to Bawtry, then by wagon to Worksop, and finally Hardwick. At Stroubridge Fair, in September, the household obtained ling, stockfish, soap, corks, and candlewicks. More exotic wares like spices, currents, and sugar loaves were bought by Timothy Pusey in London, while in Nottinghamshire at the Lenton fair in November, Bess' agents were able to purchase silk and thread of gold. Hubbard, 252-253.

<sup>290</sup> On the history of English cartography, see e.g. Barber op. cit., as well as the overviews in *English map-making 1500-1650: historical essays*, ed. Sarah Tyacke (London British Library, 1983), Sarah Tyacke, *Christopher Saxton and Tudor map-making* (London: British Library, 1980), Victor Morgan, "The Cartographic Image of 'The Country' in Early Modern England," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 29 (1979): 129-54, P.D.A. Harvey, "Estate Surveyors and the Spread of the Scale-Map in England 1580," *Landscape History* 15 (1993): 37-49.

<sup>291</sup> Agas, *A Preparative to Plattinge of Landes and Tenemets in Surveigh* (1596), cited in McRae, 194.

<sup>292</sup> See A. W. Richeson, *English Land Measuring to 1800: Instruments and Practices* (Boston: MIT Press, 1966), 29-89 on how surveying practices in England changed over the course of the sixteenth century.



valuable rocks). This didn't happen wholesale by any means since oral testimony was used in "conveyance" processes and "surveying courts" well into the nineteenth century. But as PDA Harvey observes, maps like Agas' 1581 survey of the Toddington Estates was produced in conjunction with a manorial court process. In Harvey's words, this map "may well have stood on its own without a written survey."<sup>293</sup>

The analogy between Raleigh looking over the South American landscape and the Lord overlooking his table appears especially pertinent to our exploration when one considers that the instrument that Agas used to make these types of maps was indeed a special kind of table: a plane table. The plane table took more complex developments in cartographic technology being developed on the continent by people like Gemma Frisius (famous for his theodolite) and transposed them into a form that was easier for less mathematically adept English surveyors to understand and operate. Agas writes that he was using a plane table in the 1560s. The most information that we have about early plane tables (few have survived, probably because of wear on the wood) comes from a sixteenth-century French publication by Abel Foullon (1551) in which he describes and illustrates how to use his "*holometre*".<sup>294</sup> (Figs. 34-36) This plane table consisted of a board on which the surveyor affixes a piece of paper with a frame.<sup>295</sup> A small compass inserted into the object provides orientation, while along the table's edges are rulers (divided into 1000 units of whichever local measuring system is used, e.g. *toises*, or feet). Pivoting at either end of the ruler are right and left hand rulers ("*verges*"); the left of which slides to any point on the scale. Each of these is outfitted with a semicircle carrying sights, and a plumb-line. The table rests on a pedestal atop a ball, so that it can be clamped then tilted and pivoted in different directions. The surveyor uses this swiveling instrument not to measure lines on the landscape, but rather to establish *points* whose distance is marked in relation to one another directly with a pencil on the paper. The surveyor can then use trigonometric calculations (based on the relative heights of the points in the landscape, and the corresponding angles) to then establish the measurements of distance between the points on the page. It is then that a line can be drawn. Instead of capturing "area" by laying out lines (e.g. by hanging ropes and chains on poles, as surveyors had done earlier in the century) and then using geometry to figure out what has been enclosed, one establishes a potentially infinite series of points that spread, web-like, through space (thereby turning it into "place" through the imposition of a singular mathematical authority, which served the interests of property owners, as we will see).<sup>296</sup> Fig. 37

The plane table allowed the surveyor in this way to draw directly in the field without, ironically, having to move through the entire estate with measuring tools. Instead, the plane

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<sup>293</sup> P.D.A. Harvey, "English Estate Maps: Their Early History and Their Use as Historical Evidence" in *Rural Images: Estate Maps in the Old and New Worlds*, ed. David Buisseret (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 41-42.

<sup>294</sup> In 1566, Agas writes, he used the "plain" table, "sometimes directed by needles, sometimes by the former station, as it is now used". Five years later, he moves to the theodolite, having gained more experience and with the aid of Thomas Digges' *Pantometria*, which described its use. Digges himself referred to the plane-table in his 1591 edition of the *Pantometria*, in which he deprecates it and describes it as something used by those who know nothing of arithmetic. E.G.R. Taylor The plane-table in the sixteenth century, *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 45:4 (1929), 205-211.

<sup>295</sup> See Taylor and Gerard L'E Turner, *Scientific Instruments 1500-1900: An Introduction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 43-44. Turner notes that the plane table was regularly used well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in India, for instance. The illustrations in Taylor's text come from Foullon and the first English publication wherein the plane-table appears, by Cyprian Lucar (1590).

<sup>296</sup> For an description of how one mapped using triangulation, see E.R.A. Taylor E. G. R. Taylor, "The earliest account of triangulation", *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 43:6 (1927), 341-345.

table's network-like rendering of points mapped by calculating the distance between the points (generally points of high altitude, like an Elizabethan prodigy house, or a church steeple) that he marked directly on the paper affixed to his plane table. For someone like John Dee, it was the mathematical assurance offered by triangulation surveying techniques like these that ensured that property could be properly understood. Dee draws attention to the etymological connection between geometry and land-measuring and extolling the 'just' science of "lines, plaines, and solides (which) (like a divine Jusicier,) gave unto every man, his owne".<sup>297</sup> Measurement was, as Dee implies, a way to understand the self through land-holdings and as much as one could see one's property clearly thanks to mathematical clarity and hence know what one *was* thanks to knowledge of that which one possessed: self and property conflate.

In other words, a more accurate (and fair, or just) *view* of landholdings could be revealed by not actually being *in* the land, but *above* it. A Lord, thus, need not actually know his property personally on the ground because the well-made estate map reveals it to him more accurately (and all at once) on a piece of paper than it would in person. In John Norden's well-known plaidoyer for the surveyor entitled *The Surveyor's Dialogue* (1618), a surveyor arguing with a tenant thus announces to the suspicious farmer that "a plot rightly drawn by true information, describeth so the lively image of a Manor, and every branch and member of the same, as the Lord *sitting in his chair*, may see what he hath, where, and how it lieth, and in whose use and occupation every particular is, upon the sudden *view*".<sup>298</sup> For the tenant, as portrayed by Norden, the fear of the surveyor stems from an anxiety that the latter might discover that the farmer has been concealing things (produce, labor, surreptitious beds of vegetables, etc.). The map, he argues following Dee's rhetoric of truth, would reveal to the Lord what was truly *there* through the mechanism of spatial abstraction. The farmer would have nowhere to hide. This frames the question of mapping in moral terms, with the surveyor as a key agent of recovering that which was dishonestly misappropriated. Bess herself engaged numerous lawyers in her final years in multiple lawsuits intended to reveal assets that she claimed were being concealed – though the defendant in Bess' cases was not a tenant farmer, but rather Gilbert Talbot, who in turn accused Bess of concealing assets he claimed as his own.<sup>299</sup> The point of the new techniques of surveying, thus, was transforming a landscape of assets into a paper plane whose flatness ensured the production of an overview that could see as much as possible and exert authority based on the map's visual rhetoric of "just" measurement.

The lord, on high, thereby receives information from the surveyor that s/he can depend upon, thanks to the new accuracy of tools like the plane table. That table makes an accurate rendering that the surveyor can transfer to the lord's table, or desk inside the home, which is likely one, if not perhaps the central, nodal points on the map. The landscape reveals itself to him (or her) as a "picture", to use Sidney's term, comprised not of an Italianate perspectival geometry that fixes the eye in relation to a distance point,<sup>300</sup> but rather as a document which positions the

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<sup>297</sup> McRae, 182.

<sup>298</sup> John Norden, *The Surveyor's Dialogue (1618)*, ed. Mark Netzloff (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 25.

<sup>299</sup> Bess appealed to Robert Cecil about this matter, writing, "I am wronged by those in reason should seek my comfort. The Earl of Shrewsbury under pretence of a grant of concealed lands, goeth about to overthrow the estate of some lands formerly conveyed to my children and dearly obtained by me and upon great considerations, the matter I have caused to be briefly set down, which my son William Cavendish will present to you." Cited Lovell, 262.

<sup>300</sup> Here I hope to nuance somewhat Cosgrove's analysis of the prospect presented in Denis Cosgrove, "Prospect, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 10, no. 1 (1985): 45-62. Cosgrove's analysis relies on Italian and geometric perspectival models, whereas in England it seems

eye in relation to *multiple* possible points of interest, as the woodcut depiction of the plane table in action makes clear. Fig. 35 Just as the surveyor can pivot and swivel his viewing tools, so too can the Lord scan on the map, joining points to one another flexibly, in a manner that allows to multiple combinations. On top of houses like Hardwick and Wollaton, the wide vistas extending 360 degrees around the beholder lent themselves to a similar kind of viewing so that we can start to discern an emerging relay between structures, or modes of viewing in both cartography and architecture, whereby in the latter the cartographic gaze becomes incorporated into the home as an aesthetic experience to be enjoyed by the class for whom estate maps were being made.

None other than John Dee noted that Tudor landowners liked “to beautify their Halls, Parlors, Chambers, Galleries, Studies, or Libraries...liketh, loveth, getteth and useth Mappes, Chartes, and Geographical Globes,” indicating how practices of “viewing” were finding their way into wealthy homes in the form of cartographic objects; here, I am suggesting further, however, that the surveyor’s gaze itself was becoming incorporated into the home, and with it certain social implications about how ownership of space was being claimed.<sup>301</sup> In some ways, one might hypothesize that this particular mode of spatial articulation and perception meshed well with the Tudor interest in and preference for parataxis. Paratactic viewing, as we have noted, demands that the beholder builds meaning from scattered pieces of information. This type of perceptual experience requires flexibility, encouraging the beholder to consider various potential pathways, or channels of potential meaning. Puzzling together the paratactic device (whether a sonnet, a grotesque frieze, or a house) is thus similar in structural ways to negotiating a map, which encourages the “viewer” to scrutinize a plethora of potential paths, or spatial coordinates simultaneously. For Tudor maps did not tell their audiences how to get from a to be (in Saxton’s maps of English counties, for instance, there are no roads). What they provided was a means of considering how points of interest stood in a clear spatial relation to one another, thanks to the homogenizing effect of the surveyor’s uniform scaling.

This is a *punctual* type of looking that aims at the creation of spatial networks. It was precisely this type of viewing that interested Smythson’s clients like Bess and Shrewsbury (with his ships and metal), or Willoughby (who constructed a type of wooden railway to transport coal from the mines at Wollaton directly to a wharf on the river Trent in an attempt to best figure out how to get resources out of the ground and to market in disparate locations).<sup>302</sup> This also appears to have been one of Burghley’s interests when building the Green Gallery above his son Robert’s maze garden. In the loggia, Burghley incorporated trees, filled with the genealogies of the English nobility, classified by county. These were accompanied by images of the specialty products of each county and painted maps of the shires of England, as well as chorographic depictions of the most important towns in Christendom: house and map conflate, overlooking gardens laid out as a riddle to be solved cartographically. Moreover, in 1592, the secretary to the Duke of Württemberg noted that this remarkable display was outfitted with “tables of inlaid-work and marble of various colours, all of the richest and most magnificent description.”<sup>303</sup> Each element of the display here, including the tables, became a landscape to scan and analyze punctually so that one can begin to visualize not only who belongs where (the heraldry), but also

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that the “prospect” can also be understood in relation to the specific type of vision provided by the theodolite and plane table, which differs from Albertian perspective considerably.

<sup>301</sup> Dee, cited in Morgan, 148.

<sup>302</sup> Michael Reed, *The Age of Exuberance, 1550-1700* (London; Boston: Routledge, 1983), 83-86.

<sup>303</sup> Cited in Sutton, 61.

how to maximize value (the specialties of the shires) by building a clever and efficient spatial network. The tables are not only attractive accessories, but become objects to scan as well. Metaphorically, they also suggest that they could become display supports for the wealth extracted from England's counties thanks to the mapping practices patronized by Cecil.<sup>304</sup>

There were further similarities of an explicitly social dimension that were shared between mapping and new types of prodigy homes like Hardwick as well. We have seen, for example, how at Hardwick and Wollaton, labor and laborers were architecturally "disappeared" in the sense that they were relegated to the ground and kept separate from the upper household; they were not gone, but were less plainly visible than in the traditional Great Hall. Likewise, estate maps do not represent laborers or dialogic systems of estate appraisal akin to traditional rogation ceremonies. Instead, the human figure in maps like Agas' Toddingham vanishes, while the mechanism of authority that produced the map – as J.B. Harley so often reminded us – makes itself manifest only through its "blankness."<sup>305</sup> We cannot directly draw a straight line connecting an object like the Eglantine table and a plane table, but we can locate them as part of a set of dynamics shared by both the cartography that was or increasing interest to wealthier members of English sixteenth-century society and the houses which that particular slice of society built to suit new aesthetic and social preferences. The plane table laid bare one's "own" by abstracting space and depopulating it while that same self physically also retreated away from the ground, moving upward to share an overview with friends and relations of a similar social status. The overview was both a mechanism by which wealth could be accumulated and maintained as well as an integral part of what the wealthy appreciated in their homes: the opportunity to gaze downward and affirm their social position through the articulation of a vertical hierarchy. The Eglantine table's presence in the High Great Chamber underscored this withdrawal and the desire to create a new architecture of social "distinction". Here, the broken consort resounded sweetly and games could be played peacefully with a confidence derived from the fact that all the players (musicians and gamers) harmonized in terms of class.

This did not mean that labor disappeared from the home (or the ground), but it began to sink *into* it, hiding below the vast glass walls of structures like Hardwick New Hall, which so dramatically advertised Bess' view. In the house, Bess' working area was located in and around her heavily upholstered bed chamber on the first floor, rather than on the second. Here she toiled until the end of her life in relative warmth and comfort.<sup>306</sup> In 1601, the space was filled with two small leather-covered desks, and one large desk plus a 'lyttle deske to write on gilded', as well as boxes for storing gold and silver coin, plus three "little coffers", three "flat coffers" (for jewels and money), while in the nearby maid's chamber there were more iron coffers (in all, 57 boxes, trunks and coffers were tallied in this part of the house) as well as weights and scales.<sup>307</sup> Timothy

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<sup>304</sup> On Cecil as a map collector see Morgan and especially R.A. Skelton, "Maps of a Tudor Statesman" in *A Description of Maps and Architectural Drawings in the Collection Made by William Cecil...* (Oxford: Printed for Presentation to Members of the Roxburghe Club, 1971), 3-35. Bess received reports about the decorations at Theobalds from her son Charles Cavendish, who wrote to Bess describing Cecil's home 1580s when she was busy adding onto the Old Hall at Hardwick. Among other aspects of the architecture, he seems to have especially admired the long gallery and the green gallery and his descriptions appear to have influenced Bess' designs for the Great High Chamber and Forrest Chamber which she placed on top of the Old Hall. See Hubbard, 203-205.

<sup>305</sup> Eg. J.B. Harley, "Meaning and Ambiguity in Tudor Cartography," in *English Map-Making 1500-1650*, ed. Sarah Tyacke (London: The British Library Board, 1983), 27-41 and Harley, "Deconstructing the Map", *Cartographica*, v. 26, n. 2 (Spring 1989), 1-20.

<sup>306</sup> Thornton (1971), 32.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

Pusey (who probably also slept nearby in calling distance), her son William, and other trusted servants could assemble there with the *Countess* on numerous stools at numerous working surfaces to pour over the vast amount of estate accounts, law suit paperwork, correspondence, and other managerial affairs, trying to assemble an overview of an ever-changing landscape of business affairs, assets, and properties. By 1600, Bess was earning £10,000, collected by seventeen bailiffs and passed on in money bags to the receiver William Reason (who had a bedroom downstairs), who then gave him to Pusey (who was paid ten quid a year plus the proceeds from a property leased to him) and Rowland Harrison, a clerk controller who was the keeper of the fortnightly accounts (totaled by Pusey and signed off on by Bess).<sup>308</sup>

These working spaces withdrawn from public view were also where Bess kept one of the two “mapps” that she owned (the other one being in the wardrobe). We cannot know what was on the map, but we do know from Smythson designs for a business closet drawn up in the 1580s that the surveyor assigned spaces in the working room for maps directly opposite the closet’s single window, flanking the “chimney”. Between window and maps is a series of desks, shelves, and places “for writings”. The ensemble suggests a kind of associative reflection between the view outward from the paned window, the gridded sorting mechanisms for paperwork, and the map as a form of visual representation that not only complemented but also somehow bridged the window, drawers, and desks; oversize keyholes in the locks securing the writing tables (which fold out from the wall) highlight the premium that Smythson and his clients seemed to place on loudly announcing secrecy and exclusivity. Figs. 37-38 In such a space, one might imagine, sat Norden’s Lord in his chair; it is certainly not unlike where Bess sat while working, on a “Chare of russet sattin stript with silver with silver and russet silk frence, too foote-stooles of wood, too Carpetes of turkie worke, a Covering for the russet sattin Chare of scarlet imbrodred with flowers of petepoynt” by the fireplace in her bedroom and withdrawing chamber on Hardwick New Hall’s first floor.<sup>309</sup> Documents not currently in use could be sent down to the ground floor, where a specially-built “evidence house” or muniments room lay adjacent to the bedroom occupied by William Cavendish when he was not in London. This space was fitted out with 492 drawers (again reminiscent of Smythson’s office sketch), which could be pulled open with tasseled handles made by Bess’ in-house joiner William Bramley; the storage space (a veritable safe!) was protected by tin plate reinforcing the door and iron bars on the window (made from metal forged at Bess’ ironworks at nearby Wingfield).<sup>310</sup>

The kinds of desks that Bess was using in her bedroom were in some ways more similar to plane tables than to tables like the *Eglantine*. They were most likely portable, perhaps with fold-up tops and compartments underneath in which ink and writing supplies could be stored, like those which William Cavendish had bought for her so many years before.<sup>311</sup> Her agents and servants could whisk them in and out, setting them up in various constellations in order to sift through accounts with Bess. At this point, it was the servants who were maintaining inventories of household and business expenses and no longer the Countess herself who was doing the writing. Her job was now that of the overseer: she surveyed their work and, if satisfied, jotted down her signature in approval. Bess’ entrepreneurial empire flowed into the bed chamber in this manner, through her correspondence and the accounts furnished by her staff, before being sent to

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<sup>308</sup> Hubbard, 240.

<sup>309</sup> Thornton, 32.

<sup>310</sup> Hubbard, 280. See also Wiggins (2017) 97-101.

<sup>311</sup> On these desks see Thornton, 16.

the muniments chamber for storage in what would have amounted to a colossal property atlas, in list form.

Bess' signature was key to maintaining this empire because it marked her authority over the entire constellation; it also served a security function: its consistent form could be used to detect fraud and forgery, a real problem.<sup>312</sup> As Alison Wiggins has pointed out, one of the remarkable things that happened when Bess married Shrewsbury was, in fact, that her signature suddenly established itself with new authority and consistency. When she had been married to Cavendish, she tended to sign her name in different ways and different spellings. On her account book, as we have seen, her signature read "Elyzabeth Cauendyssh", but her name might also appear as Elyzabethe Cauendyssh, or E Cauendyssh. Later, married to St. Loe, she sometimes signed her name as E Seyntlo, sometimes Elezabeth Seyntloo.<sup>313</sup> But upon her fourth marriage, she appears to have made a conscious decision to sign her name only in one way: EShrouesbury, generally conjoining the E and the S through the e's middle bar. With the marriage, came a new sense of self.

In the Eglantine table, this self remains in certain ways elusive. It does not yet appear outright as a set of initials (as opposed to those we find inlaid into the Brome table). Instead, Bess' "self" seems to emerge through the expression of ambitions denoted by the table's scale, obvious expense, up-to-the-minute stylishness (the latest music, the latest strapwork design), patterning preferences (which corresponded to the other furniture at Chatsworth), and the exaltation of social and familial entanglements, that stretch back to Cavendish and forward to Shrewsbury. The object, moreover, strikes a balance between Bess and her husbands while also seeming to imply hopes for a bright future, built upon a monumental foundation *stabilized* by an acute attention to detail(s). At Hardwick New Hall, the aspects that remained a paratactic suggestion in the Eglantine blossomed into something much more concrete. The table transformed not just into a house, but a mechanism for viewing, part of an infrastructure of oversight, and a means by which – to cite Dee again – Bess could truly know her "owne". One could admire the table's top there, from above, just as one could admire the landscape of properties Bess had amassed and exploited in Derbyshire from the roof. Completed for the most part after Shrewsbury's death, Bess no longer needed to think of balancing herself with her husband when building Hardwick New Hall. Instead, the house/"table"/image she constructed as a self-portrait there was fully hers, and she signed off on it: on the roof, as we have seen, her signature appears, much as it would appear on each element of her epistolary networking and her accounts. And just as she had emblazoned her name on the cover of her account book years ago as "Elyzabeth Cauendyssh", she now emblazoned the landscape with her initials as "ES". But with even greater self-assurance. The table had grown into a platform for viewing a landscape framed by her own hand(writing). Figs. 39-40. The widow had reached her peak.

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<sup>312</sup> See Wiggins (217), 139-140.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid, 138.

## Transitional Space I: no corners

The previous chapter about one Englishwoman's table was improbably - some might say impossibly - long. Yet the table itself was long too, as was its owner's life. By the time she died at eighty-one, Bess of Hardwick had built up an expansive web of kinship and business relations through which she aimed to solidify a future for her children. These structures and this biography, I have argued, were built into her *dormant*. In a sense, that was always the political function of this kind of object. Its form, as we have seen, was designed to orchestrate a social choreography that articulated specific forms of lordship and community. The long table marked ownership of a landed estate, but also implied through customs of English hospitality that an estate's bounty was to be spread magnanimously by the Lord through the entirety of the social body. In this context, the long table also, as we have observed, became a site at which dynasty articulated itself: literal tables as well as portraits (painted "tables") took center stage in expressing Tudor genealogical and dynastic ambitions. The rectangular long table and the rectangular portraits lining 16<sup>th</sup>-century "long galleries" and upper high chambers like the ones at Hardwick New Hall conflated in ways that were both visually analogous and metaphorically connected. In both cases, they placed individuals within a chain of social relations and social aspirations that unfolded horizontally in space and time. In Bess's case, the social network she built throughout her life is one that found a complex expression in the Eglantine table that she (likely) commissioned in order to fashion a self-portrait that mediated between husbands, children, and properties.

Dormant tables like hers, thus, can be understood as objects of "betweenness". They served as physical objects that linked Lord and servants, man and wife, parents and children, and, in Bess's case, a widow and several husbands. The table, made by joiners, served as a visual and material joint that linked these relational networks and mapped them into space. The dormant's task was to solidify these social relations and mitigate social and dynastic slippage while at the same time serving as a connective tissue to bring disparate parts of a community together. As its name suggests, the form of the dormant – both its heft and its rectangularity – bespoke a desire to maintain a social order over time, to fix it in *place*.

In Bess's case, as a Tudor Englishwoman, the personalized table can further be understood as a means of articulating her sense of identity as a wealthy woman who, though married and a mother, was nonetheless firmly in control of her own identity, not least thanks to her deft management of the books she balanced at her "writing deske". The Eglantine table, thus, must be understood as a self-portrait that not only expressed Bess's social ambitions, but also mobilized a manner of "viewing" that tied together her cultural and economic ambitions.

Bess's Eglantine table, however, also found itself in another state of "betweenness": it not only manifested a "between" in terms of social relations, but was also a form on the brink of evolving into something new. As we have seen, physical manifestations of ownership and spatial dominance were changing by the time Bess's table was made. Her type of dormant was on the way out; it was already almost obsolete by the time she willed it to stay put upon her death in the early seventeenth-century as a kind of useable memorial to her social rise. For when the Lord had left the Great Hall and moved upward into more socially exclusive zones of the home, where grand hospitality gave way to genteel entertaining among friends and relations of a certain class and cultural capital, new types of tables were needed in order to fill these new social imperatives. Bess's dormant was not the type of table that one would traditionally have found in the Hall; it

was not intended for eating with the entire estate, but for entertaining a more socially exclusive group of social relations. The table, therefore, points toward new forms of sociability, but does so in an old-fashioned shape.

By the middle of the seventeenth-century (especially after the Restoration in 1660), the dormant table had been soundly replaced by the newly popular gate-leg table. The gate-leg table was smaller than a dormant and it was usually round or ovoid. (Fig. 1-2) Generally, one of two leaves could be folded up and down, and the gate-leg swung open or shut, hence the table's name. Earlier gate-legs still have a stretcher bar at the table's base from which the "gate-leg" folds out. This distinguishes them from the later, even more formally flexible "swing-leg" table that liberated itself from even the stretchers, enhancing the sense of social and physical mobility these objects aimed to evoke. Like the dormant, these objects tended to be made from oak (more expensive versions were fashioned from walnut or yew wood) and were held together by mortise and tenon joints. Yet these circular or ovoid objects operate in a wildly different manner than a dormant. Because of their inherent structural flexibility and light weight, they could be placed against a wall and then pulled out and unfolded. So while a heavy dormant literalizes the occupation of space through a scale and weight that make it hard to move, the gate-leg table's intimate size makes it much more mobile. It can be transferred to any number of sites and used for varying types of occasions.

In this way, the gate-leg table reflected and also consolidated the newfound type of intimacy and social parity suggested by the Tudor elite's retreat to more private intimate rooms on top of their homes. The gate-leg table was intended to bring together a small-ish group of like-minded social equals, or a small family unit. As dining moved upward and away from the hall and divorced itself from the traditional crowd of servants and household staff that used to dine with the Lord's family, the circular or oval gate-leg form furnished a new mechanism of gathering. Family and friends could eat alone, served by those below but not seated with them (Samuel Pepys owned a ten-seater gate-leg, which was quite large).<sup>314</sup> By 1679 in Ham House, eight oval tables of this sort occupied the Great Dining Room but *not* the Hall, which remained linked rhetorically to traditional banqueting culture centered around the body of an estate's singular owner at his dormant, whereas the gate-leg table furnished a more diffused mode of sociability and authority.<sup>315</sup>

For one thing, it could disseminate its micro-structure throughout a house since it was easy to move. In this manner, it provided a means of spatial ownership that was at once more intimate, and more expansive than a dormant. It was more like the surveyor's portable plane table; moving everywhere and encouraging the eye to move in all directions (it was round after all), as it would while "viewing" a landscape to make, or read, a property map.<sup>316</sup> The gate-leg's roundness also meant it diffused – or concealed – social hierarchy and power dynamics, or, at the very least, re-formed them. At the dormant table, a group sat together in a fashion that restricted social access because one could only speak to people directly at one's sides. Since

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<sup>314</sup> Fiske, 128.

<sup>315</sup> Fisk, 127.

<sup>316</sup> A gate-leg table now in the Museum of London was in fact used to settle property disputes between tenants and landlords after the Great Fire in 1666 at the Fire Court at Cliffords Inn (it bears an inscription reading 'Sir Matthew Hall [Hale] & the other Judges, sat at this Table in Cliffords Inn to determine the disputes respecting Property, which arose after the Great Fire of London AD1666. Presented by R.M.Kerr Esq. L.D. 1893.' Because tenants were often tasked with funding repair work on their rental properties after the fire, there were many legal disputes. In the aftermath of the fire, which destroyed much of the city, lighter and more flexible furnishings like gate-leg tables would have been more desirable than heavy dormants, which were difficult to move in an emergency. Fig. 3.



seating order was decided by rank, this meant that one could only speak to those who occupied an adjacent rung on the social ladder. At a gate-leg table, however, one could gather in a new manner that facilitated “seeing and conversing” *across* the table.<sup>317</sup> Although everyone seated knew who was at the head of the social hierarchy, the table’s form offered a smoke-screen of equality. Or course, the table-group had already been filtered through the social architecture of distinction that we described in the previous chapter as a fixture of late sixteenth-century great English houses. A group sharing a gate-leg table *were* more equal in station both literally in terms of social status and metaphorically, in terms of what the round table symbolically expressed.

This flexibility also rendered the gate-leg a desirable form sometimes even for banquets. For instance, in 1669 when the Grand Duke of Tuscany was completing his travels in England and gave a banquet in honor of King Charles II, he had an oval table set up in the center of the room, which did not having a predetermined seating order, as a report of the event indicates: “having sat down, his majesty called the Duke of York to set by him on his right hand, and the prince on his left.”<sup>318</sup> This was eating and socializing in a new (early) modern style. Each diner at that particularly grand oval table was also provided with knives and forks, another novelty that highlighted a growing interest in the table as a site at which emerging notions of individuality and personal autonomy could be articulated, under the aegis of a shared set of table manners that limited the possibility of social gaffes.<sup>319</sup> The gate-leg table’s forms thereby highlighted individual cultivation and civility as a means of staking claims for social inclusion, rather than dynastic rigidity. In this way, these new tables accentuated the qualities of social distinction we began to see emerging in Bess’s dormant table of an earlier era, for instance in the inlaid depictions of music and games: the tyranny of social skills and comportment as social glue.

Times and tables were changing; and Bess’s Eglantine table pointed both forward, and back, like a bridge. If, in her case, the table as a political object was highly personal, we will now follow the career of the gate-leg, or round table as a central object in the seventeenth-century European political imagination. As we will see, the qualities of the round table made it an

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<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> Cited in Ibid, 126.

<sup>319</sup> In general, prior to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a host did not provide flatware for guests, who generally had their own portable set of eating utensils, which they would bring to a meal. For most of the sixteenth and even seventeenth centuries, these utensils did not include a fork. The personal fork itself developed in England through the culture of banqueting houses, where dessert could be eaten at an even further remove from the household below: at Hardwick New Hall, as we have seen, one needed to exit the house via the roof in order to reach the banqueting house, which afforded both seclusion and a view of Bess’s properties. The serving fork, like cutting knives, was already present at medieval and early modern periods, but this had a different function than the eating fork. The church had not sanctioned latter (which was reminiscent of the devil’s pitchfork), though the spoon was associated with birth and hence with Christ, while the knife bore associations with bread and often appeared in images of the Last Supper, or monastic eating. The fork, thus, had a more tortuous path until it found its place at the table. Even at the outset of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as the Princess Palatine recounted, Louis XIV forbid his grandsons from using forks at his table at Versailles, although they were trained to use them when dining on their own in keeping with late 17<sup>th</sup>-century etiquette. Charles I and Henrietta of England, on the other hand, outfitted their own children with small sets of knife, fork, and spoon at an early age. The three-tined fork only became common in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and forks with more tines had to wait until the later 18<sup>th</sup> for the most part. See Sarah D. Coffin, “Historical Overview” in *Feeding Desire: Design and the Tools of the Table 1500-2005* (Smithsonian Institution/Assouline Publishing: New York, 2006) 14-76 and Zeev Gourarier, “Modèles de Cour et Usages de Table: Les Origines” in *Versailles et les Tables Royales en Europe XVIIème – XIXème siècles*, ed. Jean-Pierre Babelon (Paris: Éd. de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1993) 15-32.

expedient instrument for concluding political agreements in an age during which precedence and public articulations of hierarchy among states often got in the way of political negotiations. The round table offered itself as a medium of reconciling irreconcilable differences and hence became a powerful symbol for modern peace-making in ways that are surprisingly complex and often overlooked. The table was not only a means of self-expression in early modern Europe, but also for the expression – and indeed mobilization – of new political realities. It served as a foundation to create not only a self, but a group portrait.

## Episode 2

### On Neutral Grounds: Gerard Ter Borch's *The Swearing of the Oath of Ratification of the Treaty of Münster; 15 May 1648*

This chapter addresses both the symbolic and practical roles of tables as instruments of communication in a new sort of political event that developed in the middle of the seventeenth century: a multilateral peace congress. Images of these congresses tended to foreground the table prominently, so much so that when we examine so-called documentary visualizations of early peace conferences, the table as a centering device is virtually inescapable; indeed, it is so common that we scarcely notice it although the table remains a veritable anchor in the staging of peace negotiations to this very day. Why is the table there, at the very (epi)center of what may arguably be termed the modern political order?<sup>320</sup>

This statement demands some unpacking. Of course, there were *meetings* in Europe at which peace was discussed prior to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. And tables had been used in a ritualized form at these meetings, often as sites of banquets (in the Middle Ages and Renaissance) that celebrated the closure of a peace through a *convivium*.<sup>321</sup> But the kind of large-scale, *multilateral* peace conference that we associate today with bodies such as the United Nations did not yet exist in the (early) modern West until the peace negotiations that took place at Osnabrück and Münster in the mid-1640s. And while we readily associate a specific form of table with multilateral discussions today, the fabled “round table”, it was in images of *Westphalia* that the round table – indeed the table at all – first engraved itself in public consciousness as a fixture in conceptualizing the performance and process of making modern peace. By now, the idea of the round table has become so commonplace (like tables in general), that it is something of a dead metaphor.<sup>322</sup> We will see, however, only in the next chapter that (mid) 17<sup>th</sup>-century oval and round “gate-leg” tables differed considerably in their literal and conceptual flexibility from traditional heavy rectangular *dormeurs*, which demands already perhaps that we complicate the

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<sup>320</sup> On the term congress (as opposed to conference) see Kenneth Colegrove, “Diplomatic Procedure Preliminary to the Congress of Westphalia,” *The American Journal of International Law* 13, no. 3 (1919): 450–82.

<sup>321</sup> Rituals at the table in these eras, specifically *convivia*, would take place when people and groups with animosity assembled in order to mark the overcoming of conflict and celebrate the ritualized beginning of a new era of amicability by taking a meal together. The table in this context served as a means for making a ceremonial peace with one another by assembling a group whose members had committed themselves to observe a common goal. In this way, the meal could strengthen a joint political intention by tightening social bonds, though the shared meal also contained a not-so-latent potential for conflict. For example, in the *Gregorii episcopi...Historia Francorum*, hg. 1884, lib. II, cap. 35, p. 98, the King of the Franks Chlodwig and the King of the Goths, Alarich (as narrated by Gregor von Tours), “Met on the Loire Island near Amboise near Tours, they spoke, ate and drank with one another, praising their friendship, they parted then in peace” (*Sie trafen sich auf der Loireinsel bei Amboise im Gebiet von Tours, sprachen, aßen und tranken miteinander, gelobten sich Freundschaft und schieden dann in Frieden.*) cited in See Gerd Althoff, “Rituelle Verhaltensmuster an der Tafel vom frühmittelalterlichen Gelage zum höfischen Fest” in *Die öffentliche Tafel*, 32. The meal which would have been staged as a public event, confirmed the new relationship. Yet on one occasion, having consumed much wine, an inebriated Chlodwig told a joke that offended Chramnsind that the latter stood up and abruptly split his former rival and recent friend’s head in two with his sword: a dramatic end to the meal, as well as to the newly sworn peace. Althoff, 33.

<sup>322</sup> Francesca Rigotti, “Der runde Tisch und der Mythos der symmetrischen Kommunikation,” in *Sprache des Parlaments und Semiotik der Demokratie: Studien zur politischen Kommunikation in der Moderne*, eds. Andreas Dörner and Ludgera Vogt (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1995), 290–97.

table-leg metaphor. But we will bracket this question for now, while acknowledging that it stands (metaphorically) in the room. Accordingly, this chapter explores ways in which the table emerged at Westphalia as an important agent in both diplomatic congresses *and* in seventeenth-century images of those congresses. It proposes that the table became a means of articulating very specific ideas about the tenets of an emergent state system conceptualized as a horizontal framework of states, which were at once autonomous and conjoined in order to support a metaphoric concept of peace as a kind of balance of powers *avant la lettre*.<sup>323</sup>

The table, I want to suggest, was more than an accessory to early modern peace-making. In images, and in actuality, it served as both a symbolic ground and an instrument, or even a “cultural technique”,<sup>324</sup> for calling forth a new political groundwork in which state relationships shifted from a vertically hierarchical to a horizontal model. Historians have long argued over whether the Westphalian peace treaties truly laid a new legal “ground” for modern Europe; yet whether or not one agrees that Westphalia was truly “new” as a type of event, or whether it provided a real legal foundation for Europe, one thing that we can say with certainty is that it generated new forms of representing peace-making in images.<sup>325</sup> And in these images tables played a foundational role, just as Westphalia generated – and therefore grounded – new deliberations over how peace congresses should operate. Images of tables in peace-conferences thus came to serve as a key part in a cultural imagination of peace and the mechanisms that produce and maintain it. The table anchored these deliberations in and *as* an image, becoming a foundation as well as an instrument upon which both a political imaginary and a political reality could be constructed; they came to serve as a ground zero (*tablula rasa*) for the calling forth of a new political order, a symbolic form whose values and characteristics at least in principle mirrored those of the table as an object: balance, stability, flatness, and structural cooperation. The round table in particular also could become what in German is called a “*Drehfigur*” - literally a spinning figure - that turned conflict into peace, physical ground into abstract contract,

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<sup>323</sup> Scholars have debated considerably about the origin of the balance of power as a figure of speech and *Denkfigur* in Western political ideology, generally locating its emergence in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This would mean that the arguments I am making here suggest in fact that while there was no specific articulation of political “balance” as a principle of world order, images may well have offered an impetus to create the political idea. This would imply a reversal of the notion that political theory creates the basis for representation and instead suggest more interestingly that representation can in fact provide a basis for political theory. On the general development of the idea of the “balance of power” see the relatively brief overviews provided by Heinz Duchhardt, “The Missing Balance” in *Frieden in Europa der Vormoderne: ausgewählte Aufsätze 1979-2011* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2012), 79–86 and M.S. Anderson, “Eighteenth-Century Theories of the Balance of Power” in *Studies in Diplomatic History, essays in Memory of D.B. Horn*, eds. R. Hatton and M.S. Anderson (London: Longman, 1970), 183–98.

<sup>324</sup> By cultural technique, I mean what German scholars of cultural studies would call a *Kulturtechnik*. See for instance Bernhard Siegert, “Kulturtechnik,” in *Einführung in die Kulturwissenschaft*, ed. Harun Maye and Leander Scholz. (Fink: Munich, 2011), 95–118. I will elaborate upon this later in this chapter.

<sup>325</sup> The literature on this topic is predictably voluminous. For overviews of these arguments see, for example, Heinz Duchhardt, “Westfälische Friede und Internationales System im Ancien Régime” in *Historische Zeitschrift* 249, no. 3 (1989): 529–43 and Heinrich Steiger, “Der Westfälische Frieden: Grundgesetz für Europa?” *Historische Zeitschrift. Beihefte, New Series, Vol. 26, Der Westfälische Friede. Diplomatie – politische Zäsur – kulturelles Umfeld – Rezeptionsgeschichte* (1998): 33–80. See also the introduction to Niels May, *Zwischen Fürstlicher Repräsentation und Adliger Statuspolitik: Das Kongresszeremoniell bei den westfälischen Friedensverhandlungen* (Ostfildern: Thobbecke Verlag, 2016). For a recent French interpretation on histories of peace and conflict resolutions including Westphalia, see *La France et la Paix*, ed. Lucien Bély et al. (Paris: Paris-Musées, 2016). The standard German history of the Westphalian Congress remains Fritz Dickmann, *Der Westfälische Frieden*, (Münster: Aschendorff, 1985).

division into unity (and as the motto of the European Union today proclaims, unity in(to) diversity).

I propose to investigate the seventeenth-century peace table's foundation through the lens of Gerard Ter Borch's 1648 *The Swearing of the Oath of Ratification of the Treaty of Münster; 15 May 1648* because this is the image that provided a grounding template for nearly all subsequent images of western political diplomacy, which adopted a *reportage* rather than an allegorical mode of representation.<sup>326</sup> Fig. 1 Ter Borch's *The Swearing* was an image that launched a thousand proverbial ships and one that dovetailed well with the historical construction of Westphalia as a grounding (and groundbreaking) historical event already in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. For Ter Borch's painting offered a means not only of bearing witness to the Spanish-Dutch peace ratified as part of the Westphalian agreements, but also provided a visual mode of conceiving of a "neutral" ground as both the result and the *basis* of making modern peace in the West. In Ter Borch's image – as we will see – multiple grounds can be observed to intersect and they do so, as we will see, at the juncture of the table in the painting's center which offers itself (at the risk of over-using the word) as a foundation that is also a *ground* for making and imagining peace. These overlapping conceptual and formal grounds present a surprising and powerful relay between instruments of pictorial and political mediation, translation, and representation centered around a table in a manner that neatly encapsulates nascent notions of a European state system comprised of interlocking, but autonomous units assembled on a horizontal, "neutral" ground. This foundation then furnishes a multifaceted terrain for future, collective action. The table at the very center of the image thus performs several tasks. It acts as a joint (in the sense of a juncture where various parts conjoin) and as a leveler. But it also operates as a means of separation while simultaneously providing an enduring basis for a new political imaginary. In the following, we will examine these three instrumental roles in order to tease out aspects of the table's central and remarkably potent role in Ter Borch's painting as well as those images that subsequently used his work as a pictorial foundation.

#### *Ter Borch's Even Grounds: tables as joints and levelers*

Ter Borch's painting is most famous for the ways in which it defined a new mode of documentary representation of seventeenth-century political events, specifically peace congresses.<sup>327</sup> For certain aspects of the image convince the viewer of its veracity by locating the beholder directly at the scene: Ter Borch himself stands on the far left side of a large group of darkly clad men assembled, frieze-like, in a line behind a round table draped in green velvet. The artist "winks" at the viewer by gazing outward away from the oath-takers directly in our direction, as if we were present. This "eyewitness" effect is underscored not only by the insertion of the artist's signature on a plaque mounted on the wall above him, but also in the attention that the artist has paid to local detail. He appears to have rendered the space of the so-called *Friedensaal* in the Münster town hall with great accuracy. As if there *in situ*, we can make out the details of the woodwork along the walls and the large circular candelabrum poised above the

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<sup>326</sup> On the historical evolution of peace iconography in the west see the essay collected in *PAX. Beiträge zu Idee und Darstellung des Friedens*, ed. Wolfgang Augustyn (Munich: Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, 2003), especially Hans-Martin Kaulbach, "Friede als Thema der bildenden Kunst: Ein Überblick", 161-242. As a term, diplomacy is anachronistic. It only came into use shortly after the French Revolution. See May, 35.

<sup>327</sup> See the overview in Alison McNeil Kettering, *Gerard Ter Borch and the Treaty of Münster*. The Hague: Mauritshuis; Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 1998.

table. Each face is also rendered with assiduous attention to detail, offering a series of miniature portraits of recognizable figures, including seven Dutch delegates and the two leading Spanish envoys.<sup>328</sup> Ter Borch's masterful ability to render the materiality of surfaces makes each detail—from the figures facial features to the festive foliage behind them—come to life in a way that adapts the attention to minutiae characteristic of “eyewitness” 17<sup>th</sup>-century battle scenes and transposes it onto a diplomatic circumstance. In both cases, the battle and treaty-signing, the viewer is made to feel privy to all elements of the event; we can even see the details on the red velvet boxes and seals in which the treasured paper treaties will be guarded under lock and key for posterity.<sup>329</sup>

In striving for such veracity in this context, Ter Borch renders the political act of making peace as an event proper—one with choreography, staging cues, and props—that could be followed and rehearsed in its specificities, rather than through an allegorical filter. Of course, historians are also quick to note the ways in which Ter Borch also departed from fact: he shows the two delegations swearing an oath upon the ratified peace treaties *simultaneously*, whereas we know from reports that the Spanish plenipotentiaries had arrived first and also swore the oath prior to the Dutch.<sup>330</sup> This unity of time finds a spatial echo in the Ter Borch's decision to arrange the figures in a balanced row behind the table, rather than around it as would have been the case. In doing so, he engineers an image that is accessible to the viewer who can clearly see all the actors from the front and is thereby “invited” both into the painting and to the table. It also creates a strategically balanced image in which a symmetry and, therefore, equal authoritative weight is allotted to both parties at once. Neither is in front nor behind, either temporally or spatially. For the Dutch delegation, this horizontality was arguably the most important aspect of the event: In terms of territorial changes, the treaty did little more than to ratify the status quo.<sup>331</sup> What it *did* do, however, was to make manifest the Spanish crown's acknowledgement of the Republic as a sovereign political entity on equal footing with the Iberian monarchy, and this itself was a momentous development in European politics generally and for the United Provinces in particular.<sup>332</sup>

This is the standard story of Ter Borch's accomplishment. Yet it seems to me that something is missing in this description: the ground—the ground that serves in the image as the horizontal leveler, marking and staging the image of the figures' representational and political

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<sup>328</sup> Twenty-two have been identified, in part thanks to portraits painted by the artist himself during his stay in Münster. *Ibid.*

<sup>329</sup> See Theo H.P.M. Thomassen, “Der Friede von Münster: Ein Nationales Symbol in Säuerfreiem Papier,” in *1648: War and Peace in Europe*, ed. Klaus Bussmann, Allison David and Heinz Schilling (Münster: Verlagsgesellschaft 350 Jahre Westfälischer Friede, 1998), 475–84.

<sup>330</sup> Peñaranda provided a description in a letter to King Philip IV, cited in Kettering, 14–15.

<sup>331</sup> The areas of Brabant and Flanders that the United Provinces had conquered remained in their possession (no resolution was reached in regard to religion in those Catholic regions) while the VOC and WIC monopolies were extended since the Spanish were now contractually forbidden from trading in the trading zones in which the Northern provinces were dominant; the mouth of the Scheldt remained blocked, and the Dutch-Belgian border along its East-West axis was affirmed in its current state. Horst Lademacher, “Ein letzter Schritt zur Unabhängigkeit: Die Niederländer in Münster 1648,” in *Historische Zeitschrift: Beihefte, New Series* 26. Der Westfälische Friede: Diplomatie- politische Zäsur – kulturelles Umfeld – Rezeptionsgeschichte (Oldenburg: Oldenburg Wissenschaftsverlag, 1998), 346.

<sup>332</sup> It is worth noting that the artist arrived at Münster with good connections to the Amsterdam delegate Adriaen Pauw, who he painted several times during his stay in Westphalia. Ter Borch, however, went on to make portraits for both Dutch and Spanish envoys (as well as the Duc de Longueville, the top representative for France)—working, as it were, for both sides. As we will later discuss, these small individual portraits formed the basis for the faces in the oath painting. See Kettering on Ter Broch's working process and time in Munster.

parity. Ground, to put it simply, did not play second fiddle to diplomatic action either in Westphalia, or afterwards. Rather, the creation of an even playing field—of a “neutral ground”—was the condition of possibility for diplomatic action. But how was this ground to be crafted, in what ways might the crafting of political community intersect with the table at the image’s center?

In order to think through this question, let us turn to the painting. The painting itself is rendered in the artist’s characteristically sleek fashion on a copper plate, a surface support that both enhances luminosity and a smoothness, drawing painted elements together into a peaceful surface unity – a felicitous effect in light of the subject matter at hand. In the image, to recall, Ter Borch has arranged the figures in a line behind the table and thereby opened up access for the viewer to both the diplomats’ physiognomies and the table at which they gather. The gray stone floor of the Münster town hall extends out toward the beholder, beckoning the viewer’s gaze to jump the threshold into the small image in order to zoom in carefully towards the table. Ter Borch has rendered this ground as a smooth surface, erasing the fissures between the flagstones one finds in subsequent renderings of the space in a manner that serves to highlight the unity of the group by erasing suggestions of division.<sup>333</sup> Moreover the gray tone of the floor itself is composed of a scumbling of complementary periwinkle and warm ochre tones that combine to create a unified gray color field. Because the figures are arranged behind the table, the viewer is given unimpeded access to the tabletop, which appears as a raised parallel to the gray floor below. The floor contains the figures, but the table offers a vision of the *means* by which the unity upon which they swear/stand has been created *and* is to be perpetuated, namely, a signed peace treaty. Seals, papers, contracts: these are the tools that solidify the unity performed on the neutral gray ground by transferring that literal unity into the abstract space of the contractual obligation. The transfer of ineffable words and fleeting actions onto a ground of paper “fixed” them by extracting them from the worldly, impermanent bodies that spoke them and presenting them as an abstraction that could form the ground for future interpretation and deliberation.<sup>334</sup> The paper contract, or peace treaty, performed the task of representing the resolution of a contract, but also presenting a ground for disagreement down the line. It was a technique of conflict-resolution predicated upon the notion that there would be future conflicts. These would have to be resolved by returning to a foundational paper document that moved speech-acts into the abstract space of writing such that the earthly (literal) grounds of contention became in a sense less concrete than the word written on a paper support: the grounding act of a new legal order. As Ter Borch invites the viewer into the painting across the neutral gray of the floor towards the table, he also invites us in as a participant to the transposition of terrestrial ground to the ground of the new order to come.

At the same time, the round table itself is also a tool, or a technique for producing conflict-resolution. It is a *kulturtechnik*—a technique which describes what objects *do* to those who use them. A helpful way of thinking about this is to see it as a grammatical reversal: it is

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<sup>333</sup> Compare, for instance, with Cornelius Schimmel’s ca. 1830 lithograph after A.P. Friedrichs *Saal im Rathause zu Münster, worin die Berathungen bei dem westphälischen Friedenschlusse im Jahr 1648 gehalten wurden*. See Cornelia Manegold, “Bilder Diplomatischer Rangordnungen, Gruppen, Versammlungen und Friedenskongresse in den Medien der frühen Neuzeit” in *Friedensbilder in Europa 1450-1815*, ed. Hans-Martin Kaulbach (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag & Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, 2013), 48.

<sup>334</sup> In the words of Lucien Bély, for early modern diplomats, “*l’acte d’écrire sacralisé parce qu’il transformait en droit ce qui n’était jusque-là que paroles. L’écriture, plus qu’un art, devenait une technique.*” Lucien Bély, *Espions et ambassadeurs : au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Fayard, 1990), 436.

when an object takes the place of the verb and subjects take the place of objects.<sup>335</sup> In terms of the table, this could be seen as follows: the table *tables* those around it and the objects on top of it. That would imply, for instance, that the table *gathers* people around it and seats them at it. Its height creates a division between their lower and upper bodies, concentrating attention on faces and hands. In terms of the objects on it, the table places them on a horizontal plane. It equalizes them by offering them a shared base designed to minimize differences in relative position in space: a *tabula rasa*, or even field. A round table takes these qualities a step further, by specifying that the even playing field of the smooth table top will find a complement in the even playing field of those seated around the table since they will all find themselves equidistant from the table's center. Whereas at a rectangular table one could sit at the object's "head" and assume a position of hierarchical authority, a round table assembles users in a specifically level distribution. Moreover, the round table is not complete if someone is missing, in the sense that the object's form can only find its conceptual analogy if people are seated around its circumference in a relatively even form of distribution. Otherwise, there will be a gap and the circle will no longer be truly round.<sup>336</sup>

These qualities of horizontality, shared distance from a center, and a drive to closure and unity inhere in the form of a round table, regardless of the specificities in materiality, or history of a *particular* table. Just as the paper contract abstracts speech into words independent of their speakers in order to, in a sense, objectify them, so too does the table present itself as an instrument whose formal and physical qualities are abstracted from the specificities of space and time. The table adds a dimension of potential repetition to the action because its qualities determine a configuration that can function with more than one specific group of people.

The table, therefore, appears in the image as a "timeless" technology predicated upon a form of gathering that is horizontal and demands an even distribution of those beckoned to gather. This is what implies its usefulness as a political tool, since the continuity of a political system deliberated *through* the instrument of the table implies a continuity independent from the mortal actors involved in the deliberations. The table will (theoretically) continue to stand even as its users fall. And it does more: because in this instance we are specifically dealing with interstate relations, the weight of the table and its solid position raised above the ground conflate with the attributes of the paper treaties but lend them a *gravitas* that implies that the horizontal and equal relationship between Spain and the United Provinces is part of an ideal, abstract and *new* form of political order, one in which Protestants and Catholics can interact as equals. If the contract, however, is not directly and durably connected to the ground and can, therefore, also be either debated (or ripped up), the *table* is an object that not only serves a symbolic function, but also *literally* connects the ground to the contracts being written and sworn upon on its top, which is simultaneously a base, or foundation. It is not only a symbol of agreement, but the mechanism by which agreement is produced and conflict resolved in the present *and* in the future.

Ter Borch's compositional innovation in arranging the figures behind the table draws viewers' attention to this translation process from one grounding element to another through the fulcrum of the round table. Lest we have any doubts about the fecundity of this process and its "flow," a fold in the velvet green cloth at the right of the table's lower edge moves the space of

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<sup>335</sup> Cornelia Vissmann, *Zeitschrift für Medien- und Kulturforschung* 1, Schwerpunkt Kulturtechnik, eds. Lorenz Engell and Bernhard Siegert (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2010), 171-182.

<sup>336</sup> See Rigotti and Niels Werber, "Runde Tische & Eckige Tische. Technologien zur Herstellung von Übereinkunft," in *Techniken der Übereinkunft: zur Medialität des Politischen*, eds. Hendrik Blumenrath, Katja Rothe, Sven Werkmeister, Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2005), 113-132.



the floor seamlessly into the fabric swoop upwards to the flat plane of the table, a plane that finds its pendant in the contracts held in the hands of the respective heads of the two delegations. Because the table draped in green is coded with the color of both hope and spring (green), the viewer is subtly given to believe that the balanced, horizontal political order leveraged by the table has already borne the fruits of the peace contract; this will translate in the future to the festive bloom of a landscape connected to the terrestrial ground— recall the festive foliage in the background, which is drawn from the ground outside, but now stands blossoming on the new neutrally grounded order proclaimed in the Münster *Friedensaal*.

This is a trope found in multiple early modern images of peace that include tables. An anonymous woodcut German *Flugblatt*, for example, combines two images of war and peace on top of Sebastian Brandt's *Pacis in germanicum Martem Nenia*, a staged dialogue the author wrote in the context of the Swabian war between the Swiss and the Holy Roman Emperor that culminated in the Peace of Basel in 1499.<sup>337</sup> (Fig. 2) While the image of war on the upper right pictures a scene in which chaotic fighting soldiers lay waste to one another and the landscape around them, the pendant image of peace to the left shows a Janus figure seated at a table. The Janus temple was an early modern iconographic sign for peace, which was said to be announced in Ancient Rome by the ritual closing of the temple's doors.<sup>338</sup> The figure at the head of the table here, therefore, holds the keys in his right hand, while presiding over a meal that seems to stem from the labors of the peasants cultivating a field in the background. That ground has yielded the abundant sustenance that lies on the table, which metonymically stands in for a well-governed – and enclosed – territory. The state of peace, and the peaceful state with its harmonious bodies (a group of musicians flank the table) is thereby imagined as a well-laid table, which in turn is a stand in for the territory that supplies it. If we were to use the term that Macchiavelli would employ for the political state in the sixteenth century, “*stato*”, then we would see in this type of image the ways in which the status (in the literal sense of the standing) of the table connected state and peace metaphorically since there is such an air-tight conceptual relay organized visually between the lay of the land and the lay of the table.<sup>339</sup> One encounters this in numerous broadside images printed in the context of the Thirty Years War specifically. The presence of such distributable images indicate the regularity of the table's appearance in representational connections being made during the course of the war, as well as the peace agreements in Westphalia that brought closure to the conflict between tabletops and the horizontal, terrestrial ground. They also indicate that the stability of peace will depend on the metaphorically horizontal equality, or parity, of all people seated at the table: when one is proud or envious and seeks to rise above the others, the table will topple.<sup>340</sup>

Compare, for instance, the Brandt image with the anonymous comic “*Schertzgedicht, Die Früchte deß Friedens Vorstellen*” (*Joke Poem. Introducing the Fruits of Peace*). (Fig. 3) The latter depicts further scenes in which the arms of war have been exchanged for the plough, which tills a field in the background that will feed (and sustain) peace: former soldiers now spear chickens in a kitchen, where the act of piercing the birds to make food for the table is explicitly put in relation with penetrating the women also in the kitchen, or “birding” them (in German,

<sup>337</sup> On this broadside see Manegold, 43-45.

<sup>338</sup> Kaulbach, “Friede als Thema der bildnerischen Kunst: Ein Überblick”, 161-242.

<sup>339</sup> On Macchiavelli's concept of territory see Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 247.

<sup>340</sup> See Wolfgang Harms ed. *Deutsche illustrierte Flugblätter des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*. Kommentierte Ausgabe. 4. Bde. Tübingen bzw. München 1980-1989, Bd. 4, Images 257 and 178.

*vögel* is slang for intercourse) to produce offspring who will perpetuate the cycle of sowing and reaping the land. Making food for the table becomes equated to the production and fecund reproduction of peace. In other satirical images like an anonymous German print from 1632, the *Tyllische Confect = Gesegung. So jhm...gesegnet worden* the king of Sweden, the Saxon Kurfürst and the Imperial general Johann Graf Tilly share a spread of sweets, labeled with virtuous words like family, life, dignity and liberty. (Fig. 4) Yet the stability, like the sweetness, of these delicacies is undermined by the invidiousness of Count Tilly (Johann Tserclaes, commander of the German Catholic league). Whereas the Saxon and Swede share a solid horizontal foundation (symbolized by the two stone blocks placed under the Saxon's feet), the treacherous Tilly wobbles on two orbs, one of which is labelled with envy (*Invidia*), which literally translated means looking sideways: he has one eye on the table, but the other on the soldiers sneaking with brandished spears into the image, a clear indication that he cannot be trusted as a banqueting partner because he is not playing on the same "level" as the other two protagonists.<sup>341</sup>

The maintenance of stability is also foundational in Ter Borch's painting. It interweaves three levels of ground through the repetition of interrelated levels of horizontal planes: the stone floor, the tabletop, and the paper contract in order to communicate ideas about the production of peace as a contractual obligation between "equal" (horizontal) partners who stand upon the same ground as the viewer, who finds him or herself offered a proverbial seat at the table as a "grounded" observer. In this visual economy, the table serves to bridge various aspects of the image, conjoining a group around it, as well as offering an associative plane in which political unity and the peaceful and productive cultivation of territory appear visually linked to the paper peace treaty *and* the bountiful cultivation of territory that depends on maintaining the peace that the treaty defines. Like the alchemical symbol of the Uroboros, a snake swallowing its own tail that also appeared in early modern peace imagery, the circle stood for completeness, with neither a leading "head" nor a following rear. The table can be seen as transferring this principle into the ground plane of the horizontal, where it is not only a symbol, but also an actor that assembles a social world around it through the technique of tabling.<sup>342</sup> Because the table can be understood to perform this operation itself, it handily does away with the need of a human leader, who would command other human agents and thereby establish a vertical hierarchy of authority. In the same gesture, the table, as we have seen, also suggests a kind of temporal horizontality in the sense that it provides the means of reproducing a stable order over an extended and non-predetermined duration: when peace breaks down, the round table suggests that the breakdown will be repaired just as the table repaired it before. It is in this sense that Ter Borch's table flips the figure/ground orientation into a horizontal plane in which numerous heads appear as equals in both space and time: the Spanish and the Dutch delegations as representations of their respective states, monarchy and republic, upon a new even footing.

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<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

<sup>342</sup> If one were to shift the Anthropocene language paradigm away from human actors, or anthropomorphized objects, one could instead call the table an "actant" following Bruno Latour, who defines it as follows, "ACTOR, ACTANT: The great interest of science studies is that it offers, through the study of laboratory practice, many cases of the emergence of an actor. Instead of starting with entities that are already components of the world, science studies focuses on the complex and controversial nature of what it is for an actor to come into existence. The key is to define the actor by what it does-its performances\*-under laboratory trials\*. Later its competence\* is deduced and made part of an institution\*. Since in English "actor" is often limited to humans, the word "actant," borrowed from semiotics, is sometimes used to include nonhumans\* in the definition." Bruno Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 301.

*Worlds Apart: tables as separators*

If the horizontal plane in Ter Borch's image operates as a specific type of connector, we must also note that it simultaneously serves as a separator. For even as the group gathers around it, the table *and* Ter Borch's use of Netherlandish group portrait conventions ensure that each member of the group maintains a sense of autonomy. We have already seen how writing in an era of similarly strained international relations (the Thirty Years War/the Cold War), Hannah Arendt picked up on the dual nature of the table in *The Human Condition* (1958). Let us revisit her thesis on the political import of the table: "To live together in the world, means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates *and* separates men at the same time."<sup>343</sup> For Arendt, the table is a metaphor that constitutes the public realm (that what one has in common) and thereby also is an instrument for calling into being what she would refer to as a "space of appearance" that defines the political as a shared, agonistic, public arena that is shared precisely because it preserves individual autonomy.<sup>344</sup> Tables do this because they offer a tangible plane that prevents, to use Arendt's words, "our falling over each other."<sup>345</sup> They provide a planar support that we can lean on together with others and thus share as a common base, but one that also ensures that we respect a certain distance and autonomy of those seated across from us. For Arendt, the problem with modern "mass" society is precisely that this common base has disappeared: the world "between" people has lost its power to *table* them in the sense of drawing them together around a shared common ground predicated upon autonomy and difference.<sup>346</sup> Moreover, in Arendt's analysis the table does not disguise itself as nature, but announces itself as something man-made. Thus, something like a peace treaty made at a table (to which it is also in Ter Borch's rendering metaphorically *analogous*) appears as a project embarked upon and made by autonomous agents who converge together and acknowledge that the stability of their common project—its conceptual and figurative ground—resides in the recognition that building a *common* ground entails acknowledging and preserving autonomy and difference. That is what enables the peace to stand.

There is something normative in Arendt's metaphor, since it presumes in a sense that the shape of the table must be truly round if each member of a group is to maintain an equal status in

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<sup>343</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 52 emphasis mine.

<sup>344</sup> Arendt explains, "The term "public" signifies two closely interrelated but not altogether identical phenomena: It means, first, that everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity. For us, appearance—something that is being seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves—constitutes reality. Compared with the reality which comes from being seen and heard, even the greatest forces of intimate life—the passions of the heart, the thoughts of the mind, the delights of the senses—lead an uncertain, shadowy kind of existence unless and until they are transformed, deprivatized and deindividualized, as it were, into a shape to fit them for public appearance...Second, the term "public" signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it. This world, however, is not identical with the earth or with nature, as the limited space for the movement of men and the general condition of organic life. It is related, rather, to the human artifact, the fabrication of human hands, as well as to affairs which go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together." Ibid, 52.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> She continues evocatively, as we've noted in the introduction, "The weirdness of this situation resembles a spiritualistic seance where a number of people gathered around a table might suddenly, through some magic trick, see the table vanish from their midst, so that two persons sitting opposite each other were no longer separated but also would be entirely unrelated to each other by each other by anything tangible." Ibid, 52-53.

an ideal and balanced conversation in which all participants are equidistant from one another.<sup>347</sup> Yet however idealized, Arendt's analysis nonetheless points to a curious aspect of the table and the notion of finding a common political ground, which is that a common ground must be rendered materially present if it is to be shared, while simultaneously embodying an abstract neutrality that is *per se* neither here nor there. The ground "between" thus constitutes its own space, one which like a Janus face, looks in more than one direction at once in order to link and to preserve autonomy.

This is why when medieval and renaissance European rulers met to reach a political agreement, they often did so on bridges, islands in rivers, or open fields cleared of trees. Each of these situations depended upon constructing a border zone in which the rulers could approach one another as equals, carefully counting steps or calculating the distance from one shore to another in order to preserve a measured balance. The establishment of a ground upon which parity could be staged was the prerequisite for coming together. Famous examples of this included the Field of the Cloth of Gold event in which Francis I met Henry VIII at a location marked by a spear driven into the earth halfway between Ardres and Guines in the Val Doré. Freed from shrubs and trees, the ground became an plane upon which the French and English sides approached one another, each monarch leading his troops to two artificial mounds upon which they stood before the monarchs converged upon each other like mirror images, finally merging in a mutual embrace.<sup>348</sup> Parity produced, however, not a complete merging, but rather an image of two figures that were equal, but separate. In order for two kings to meet, a ground needed to be set up with a bounded demarcation symbolizing the balance of the two states. This demarcation both conjoined and separated the units since their equality also ensured their autonomy. In order for a border to be momentarily dissolved, it also needed to be constructed so that, in circular fashion, it could be agreed upon and affirmed again in the moment of its dissolution. And for a new political order to be established through a process of mutual

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<sup>347</sup> The same is true for Jürgen Habermas' concept of egalitarian discourse, which he saw as emerging from the Enlightenment gatherings at 18th-century coffee houses and occasions for social exchange that were frequently located around tables. See Rigotti "Die Diskursethik, vor allem in der Habermasschen Version scheint mir mit dem Denkmodell der Gedankenzirkulation eng verbunden, ebenso wie sie mir durch den kreisförmigen Prozeß der Lebenswelt gerechtfertigt erscheint. In der "Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns" sowie dem "Philosophischen Diskurs der Moderne" bezieht Habermas auf die Lebenswelt als vertraute Alltagswelt" und betont die wechselseitige Reziprozität zwischen der Lebenswelt und den Beiträgen des kommunikativen Handelns...In dieser, aus individuellen und kollektiven, privaten und öffentlichen Sphären und Zirkeln bestehenden Welt, entfaltet sich der praktische Habermassche Diskurs, wo alle miteinbezogenen Wesen eine Übereinkunft über die Normengeltung erreichen oder zu erreichen versuchen. Sie streben nach der Einheit, die sich aus der Mehrheit bildet, nach der Einheit, die aus der Konvergenz aller Radien im Kreiszentrum entsteht." Rigotti, 295. On Habermas and the round table see also Werber, 129.

<sup>348</sup> Thomas Rahn, "Grenzsituation des Zeremoniells in der frühen Neuzeit" in *Die Grenze: Begriff und Inszenierung*, eds. Makus Bauer and Thomas Rahn (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), 181. See also Xavier Le Person, "A Moment of 'Resverie': Charles V and Francis I's Encounter at Aigues-Mortes, (July 1538)" in *French History*, XIX, n°1 (2005), 1-27. Xavier Le Person writes, "An encounter between two princes was organized within a measured world, conceived in terms of symmetry and equidistance, in order to render an equal amount of honour to the two sovereigns. All the preconditions had to be laid down in order to maximize the ideas of resemblance and similitude at this precise and unique moment so that neither sovereign could have the upper hand. . . But within this strictly delimited code, it was also important that peace be publicly and visually acknowledged by personal gestures and actions, each of which carried immense significance." Le Person, 10. Their covenant was something shared, a "common movement" and a "fundamental likeness to one another." Ibid, 12. On the philosophy of peace in the Renaissance see also Joycelyne G. Russell, *Peacemaking in the Renaissance* (London: Duckworth, 1986), especially 3-20 and 67-89.

agreement, this fiction needed to be staged and performed. This staging, of course, demanded the appropriate material circumstances since otherwise the fiction could never produce a new material political order.<sup>349</sup>

Thus, in the medieval period when rivers were a favored meeting point between rulers (as they continue to be today),<sup>1</sup> this curious dynamic of intertwined connection and separation manifested itself frequently in borders built on specially constructed bridges. In the summer of 1475, for example, the French under Louis XI met with the English under Edward IV near Amiens on the Somme river at Picquigny. Philippe de Commeynes, a principal French negotiator in preparing the ground work for the meeting, recorded that the two sides agreed to build a long, massive bridge between the riverbanks. In the center of the bridge, they would install a strong wooden grate to separate the two monarchs like a grate in a lion's cage ("*ou milieu de ce pont, fut faict un fort treilleiz de boys comme on faict aux caiges des lyons*").<sup>1</sup> The grate, which spanned the full width of the bridge, prevented either side from crossing the newly erected boundary perched on top of the flowing Somme. But it was outfitted with holes just large enough for a forearm to pass. This border appears to have truly been necessary because a crossing of this type of division implied an incursion into the other's territory and could prove deadly. In 1419, John the Fearless (the Duke of Burgundy) and the French Dauphin Charles VII arranged to meet on a bridge over the mouth of the Yonne upon a bridge constructed for the occasion with a door in the middle. This door ultimately proved too permeable, since at some point the fearless John boldly crossed through it to the French side where he and his entourage of four men were immediately killed (so Commeynes). The negotiations were as dead as the Duke. Hence, at Picquigny Louis and Edward agreed that a more robust type of boundary was necessary to successfully execute a performance that affirmed both the autonomy of each party and their parity. When they met on either side of the grate, negotiations were performatively ratified as they bowed and embraced by extending their arms through the holes in the "*barrière*."<sup>350</sup> The physical separation provided enough autonomy to enable an agreement of non-aggression, which could be sealed by a momentary convergence followed by a mutual retreat into autonomous spaces on either side of the river.

The table as an object took this curious form of permeable/non-permeable boundary and flipped it into the horizontal. Instead of a vertical mirror, it offered a condensed version of the landscape plane, cleared of trees, and gathered negotiators around it in a manner that simultaneously offered a common ground and also a barrier between parties in conflict. In other words, it provided a neutral ground that could stand in for the landscape. Furthermore, this neutral ground benefited from a process of abstraction that transformed a particular landscape into the generalized, geometrical form of the table because this promised something akin to what Nikolas Luhmann might term "symbolic generalization."<sup>351</sup> According to Lumann, symbolic generalization is a process by which an object, like a table (or money) bridges differences in

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<sup>349</sup> On the relationship between fiction, metaphor, and political order in early modern Europe see the helpful volume *Der Fiktive Staat: Konstruktionen des politischen Körpers in der Geschichte Europas*, eds. Albrecht Koschorke, Susanne Lüdemann, Thomas Frank, and Ethel Matala de Mazza (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2007).

<sup>350</sup> See Reinhard Schneider, "Mittelalterliche Verträge auf Brücken und Flüssen (und zur Problematik von Grenzgewässern)" in *Aus Geschichte und ihren Hilfswissenschaften. Festschrift für Walter Heinemeyer zum 65. Geburtstags*, ed. Hermann Bannasch and Hans-Peter Lachmann (Marburg: Elwert, 1979), 15–16.

<sup>351</sup> See Luhmann, *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* (Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 1997). On the relationship between symbolic generalization and tables, see Werber, "Runde Tische & eckige Tische. Technologien zur Herstellung von Übereinkunft" in *Techniken der Übereinkunft: zur Medialität des Politischen* ed. Hendrik Blumenrath et al. (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2005) 113–32.

order to provide a common ground of action. The symbolically general object brings different parties together as an operative agent that enables decision-making by eliminating unnecessary complexities. In the case of money, this could mean, for example, that social differences may be discarded because money offers a transactional element that allows two people to engage in an interaction to achieve a certain purpose. When you purchase an item at a shop, it doesn't matter if there is an inherent social conflict of class, for instance, between you and the cashier: money reduces these complexities and thereby allows the purchase to take place.<sup>352</sup> Similarly, as Niels Werber has argued, the negotiating table offers the promise of shedding complexities in order to reach an agreement, since those gathered around it have already agreed to sit down at the table together in order to solve a problem. Whether they do so in good faith is another question. In an of itself, the table proposes this kind of reduction by offering a simple and generalized plane that can be shared, while simultaneously furnishing a distance that protects the corporeal autonomy of those being "tabled."

We ought to note that it was no accident that the table came to replace earlier modes of diplomatic encounters (like doors and "lion cages") for over the course of the seventeenth century, the table assumed a heightened social importance. It emerged as a focal point of popular etiquette manuals that defined new forms of civility which privileged fortifying a boundary between the bodies of individuals and the social and physical worlds around them. An increasing number of these manuals were published during the seventeenth century, often translating and updating Erasmus' seminal *On Civility in Children* (1530), but placing an increasing premium on the use of utensils as a means of marking boundaries between individuals eating together.<sup>353</sup> The maintenance of these spatial boundaries, like the use of new devices such as forks instead of fingers, prevented bodily fluids from seeping out of bounds and thereby cordoned off a zone of individual territory.<sup>354</sup> Following French historian Robert Muchembled,<sup>355</sup> we can discern here an emphasis on creating a culture in which the social gathering at the table is explicitly defined in terms that separate individuals from contact with one another's bodies, just as forks and spoons prevent direct contact with messy items such as sauces, which might ooze between multiple parties. As the individual's body becomes enveloped by an upright spatial boundary, so too does the individual's mind become focused on a "*méfiance envers soi-même*" that rejects the tyranny of the flesh and expiates fluidity and the potentially chaotic mixing of bodies and substances.<sup>356</sup> One polices one's boundaries as an outer mark of internal clarity, defined by

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<sup>352</sup> Ibid, 121.

<sup>353</sup> In the jurist Claude Hardy's 1613 version of *De civilitate morum puerilium*, he admonishes children to learn "*que le verre soit mis du côté de la main droite et le couteau pour transcher sa viande bien nettoyé, et que le pain soit à la main gauche.*" [Sic] The emphasis is on the *netteté* (sharpness) of the spatial definition surrounding the child's "zone" at the table, a notion reiterated countless times in all of the century's behavior manuals, like the *La Civilité Nouvelle* (1667) by L.D.L.M., who highlights that one must pay attention to "*ne heuter bras ny épaules de ceux qui sont assis à table, spécialement lorsqu'il boiront, et prendre garde de ne les salir.*" Cited in Robert Muchembled, *L'invention de l'homme moderne: sensibilités, mœurs et comportements collectifs sous l'Ancien Régime* (Fayard: Paris, 1988), 244.

<sup>354</sup> Antoine de Courtin exclaims in 1675's *Nouveau Traité de la civilité que se pratique en France parmi les honnestes gens*, "*Très indecent de toucher quelque chose de gras, à quelque sauce...avec les doigts.*" [Sic] cited in Ibid, 245.

<sup>355</sup> And, of course, Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978-1982).

<sup>356</sup> Muchembled, 244. On the importance of "uprightness" and the internalization of a kind of psycho-spatial cladding in early modern Europe see also Georges Vigarello's "The Upward Training of the Body from the Age of

obeying certain rules of etiquette. Instead of a connection through the flesh, the new table society is connected by a common acceptance of these rules: the “common” in terms of class becomes transposed to a common policy of maintaining personal decorum predicated upon the separation of bodies from one another. Muchembled suggests that this emphasis on decorum can be understood against the backdrop of civil strife, in which the “passions” ran high, particularly in the French religious struggles of the late sixteenth century and the Thirty Years War in the seventeenth.<sup>357</sup> Etiquette at the table became a social glue to prevent bloody spasms of passionate emotion.<sup>358</sup>

Certain objects produced in the wake of the Thirty Years War orchestrated this dynamic with remarkable visual aplomb. In 1664, the merchant and scholar from Ulm, Christoph Weickmann devised a game that he called the *Königsspiel* (“Newly invested Great King’s game”). (Fig. 5) The board conjoined four rectangular individual playing boards and a central plane, so that multiple players could take part as opposed to the dual combat of chess. In this manner, a multilateral “negotiating” territory could emerge, as it did in the War, as well as at the Westphalian peace congress. The purpose of the game was to work as if one were informed by a “state and war council” as the explanatory booklet accompanying the object explained. On the booklet’s frontispiece, a king sits at the head of a table around which Weickmann has gathered statesmen labeled with allegorical virtues like prudence and constancy; each virtuous figure stands autonomously, physical distinct from the others. Demons with masks and medusa-like hair writhe on the ground under the table cloth. These passionate outbursts of unchecked temperament have been chained out of sight, banished and rendered invisible like the genital areas of the men gathered at the table (each “privy” zone is discretely veiled by a hand, or a banderole). In the foreground, a (Habsburg?) lion and a snake are thereby tamed by *Dexteritate* so that the table’s balance can be maintained and the game of state-building can continue.<sup>1</sup> The table supports the printed field of the game board, standing in as a fiction of a neutral ground that organizes actions undertaken by a group of statesmen in which the goal is to win territory and position by cultivating alliances and cooperation. Each player is connected to the other, but also Stoically discrete. Weickmann’s game was so complex that it reads today as more of an ideological manifesto than a practically-playable game; it certainly was not widely distributed and played. However, as Philip Hilgers noted, Weickmann recommended his game for the testing of new state officials and claimed “that through this game a high-ranking person could thus investigate and interrogate all distinguished officials’ temperaments easily and without any effort, which cannot otherwise happen so easily” because the players would be forced to make political alliances in order to win.

Because the passions were thought to be located below the midriff in the unruly stomach and loins (according to Erasmus, for instance, as described in his *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* of 1503), the table offered a buffer not only between those seated across from one another, but also between the upper part of the body and the lower, animalistic half (we note, again, the ways in which the *Königsspiel* frontispiece places genital regions literally under semantic wraps!).<sup>359</sup>

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Chivalry to Courtly Civility” in *Fragments of a History of the Human Body 2*, edited by Michel Feher, Ramona Nadof, Nadia Tazi (Cambridge: Zone Books, 1989), 149-199.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid, 242.

<sup>358</sup> Philipp Hilgers, *Wargames, a History of War on Paper*. (Boston: MIT Press), 24.

<sup>359</sup> God “confined the appetitive instinct, which is attracted to food and drink and by which we were driven to the pleasures of Venus, below the midriff to the region of the liver and the belly, far from the royal seat, so that it might live there in a stall like a wild, untamed animal, because it is in the habit of inciting violent uprisings and is least obedient to the orders of the commander. Proof of the brutish and rebellious nature of this lowest part is that

The bridge barriers of yore, with their doors and holes become a plane around which each person respects the space of the others at table according to shared rules defined in terms of rationality (vs. animality), the use of utensils (forks, or in the diplomatic context, pens instead of swords), and an intensification of proximity to faces cut off from the bodies below the table plane. As if to explicate the conjuncture between table etiquette and diplomatic procedure, François de Callières wrote in his diplomatic handbook *De la manière de négocier avec les souverains* (published in 1716), “L’une des qualités la plus nécessaire à un bon négociateur est de savoir écouter avec attention et avec réflexion tout ce qu’on lui veut dire, et de répondre juste et bien à propos aux choses qu’on lui représente, bien loin de s’empresse à déclarer tout ce qu’il sait et tout ce qu’il désire... Il n’expose d’abord le sujet de sa négociation que jusqu’au point qu’il faut pour **fonder le terrain**, il règle ses discours et sa conduit sur ce qu’il décourvre tant part les réponses qu’on lui fait que par les mouvement du visages.”<sup>360</sup> By submitting his behavior to rules (regulating it), the diplomat keeps his desires in check. In doing so, he builds the foundation (“fonder”) for a ground of actions, a “terrain” that will be shared as a site of contention to be resolved through close observation and judicious strategic moves. Callières also draws attention to a further aspect of table interactions: proximity. Because the table brings its users close to one another, they can attend assiduously to faces.

This is an aspect that Ter Borch’s painting highlights. In *The Swearing* protagonists are gathered around the table in extreme proximity to one another. Their bodies even overlap with each other, so that their garments form a dark mass, which sets their white faces into relief. Nonetheless, this is not an undifferentiated mass: Ter Borch’s attention to detail in their garments indicates national specificity, Spanish, Dutch, or German. They form a kind of cultural cartography, in which costumes define a territorial unit. Yet the painter also draws our attention more specifically to the details in the diplomats’ faces, so that we can recognize them as individuals belonging to the larger delegation. If costume forms a cartographic terrain, diplomats’ faces emerge clearly in order to point to how these terrains were being forged by discrete individual players – precisely the types whose faces Callières was interested in scrutinizing through the proximity of table negotiations.

The recognition of these faces was key to the success of the negotiations on fundamental levels. Foremost, in order for negotiations to take place at all, let alone result in a binding agreement, the Dutch delegation needed to receive official recognition as a sovereign entity from the Spanish.<sup>361</sup> If not, any agreement reached was liable to being voided subsequently by the Spanish crown, since the King would not have been obliged to respect a treaty agreed upon with

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shameful part of the body, where concupiscence most exercises its tyranny, which alone of all the members foments rebellion with obscene movements despite the vain protests of the king.” Erasmus, “Enchiridion” in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, ed. John W. O’Malley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 40. On taming the prince’s passions and reining in the seditious lower body, see the forthcoming article by Felix Jaeger, “The Prince’s Prosthetic Body: Orthopedic Armor and Ethical Self-Fashioning in the Sixteenth Century,” In: *Fashioning Masculinity: Engraved Objects in the Early Modern Period*, eds, Line Cottagnies / Anne-Valérie Dulac / Anne-Marie Miller-Blaise [accepted]. The Weickmann engraving can almost be understood as a parodic demonstration of the theses explored so evocatively in Foucault’s *Order of Things*, in which semantics come to enclose the potential slippages of language and bodies in the model of the Classical *episteme*. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1994).

<sup>360</sup> François De Callières, *De la manière de négocier avec les souverains* (Geneva: Droz, 2002), 162. Emphasis mine.

<sup>361</sup> See Lademacher, and Laura Manzano Baena, “Negotiating Sovereignty: the Peace Treaty of Münster, 1648” in *History of Political Thought* vol. XXVIII No. 4 Winter (2007), 617-641.



“rebel subjects.”<sup>362</sup> This recognition, however, would not be granted initially – and directly – to the United Provinces as a sovereign *state*, but rather manifest itself in the recognition of its individual representatives as being imbued with the full and sovereign power to *carry out* negotiations. Their title was, therefore, of utmost importance.<sup>363</sup> They could not simply be envoys if they were to have the authority to sign a binding contract. Instead, they needed to be officially invested with *plena potestas*.<sup>364</sup> In other words, the Dutch demanded to be recognized as true ambassadors, on an equal legal level with the Spanish delegates, just as the Republic of Venice was recognized in the international arena, including at Münster. If the Spanish would not grant this recognition to the Dutch envoys, the Dutch refused to meet. Recognition of sovereignty through individual representatives, therefore, was the precondition of establishing a common ground upon which both sides could stand. It meant offering an equal seat at the table, not as a guest dependent on a host, but rather as a partner acknowledged as measuring up face to face. It would take a year for this recognition to come, so although the Dutch arrived in Münster in 1645, negotiations only began in 1646 and the agreement was only signed and ratified, as we have seen, in 1648. Peace was a process, one that entailed negotiating first and foremost the recognition that could lead to founding a ground upon which both sides could firmly stand.

The table was a kind of shorthand marker of Spanish recognition of Dutch sovereignty. Additionally, the portraits of the individual delegations Ter Borch had done and which he integrated into his group portrait around the table imbued each figure with a personality and a specific physiognomy. In this ensemble, the attention to detail in each face, as well as the fact that each figure appears to be reacting differently to the event at hand (some looking at the oath-takers, others reading the texts, others looking right, left, or out toward the viewer) highlights the individuality of each man. We might say that the artist’s attention to the variety of physiognomies and expressions conveys the sense of the equal *sovereignty* of all present. As Alois Riegl observed at the turn of the twentieth century, the diversity of psychological and physiological expression within Dutch group images (as opposed to the submission of individuals to a perspectival system in Italian renaissance painting) affirmed the psychological

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<sup>362</sup> Manzano Baena, 620.

<sup>363</sup> On the importance of titles and rank at Münster and Osnabrück, see Nils May. May points out that even in the 1680s, Abraham de Wicquefort’s famous diplomacy handbook *L’Ambassadeur et ses fonctions* complains that the role of the ambassador is poorly defined (indicating that the Westphalian congress had offered no clarity on this issue). Indeed, in the 1640s, it was still very unclear exactly what envoys *were*. That is to say, were they *potestas*, i.e. representatives *for* an absent prince, invested with authority to conclude agreements? Or were they actually manifestations of the absent prince’s *dignitas*, i.e. a manifestation of the prince himself? Were they representations of a prince in the flesh, or “shadows” of the prince in the sense of stand-ins, or to use the German term, *Stellvertreter*? Did it matter what rank the individual representative held in the social hierarchy? What should they be called? A medieval *nuntius*, for instance, was simply a speech organ and had no decision making power. Same for a *missus*, or a *legatus*. A procurator could make and finalize decisions, and in interest in this figure beginning in the 12<sup>th</sup> century paved the way to the modern role of the ambassador, whose titular authority and address as “excellency” seems to have crystallized around the period of the Westphalian congress, although it had – as Wicquefort’s complaints indicate – not been legally and concretely encoded by the 1680s. See May, 53-72.

<sup>364</sup> “Plenipotency” was, as Manzano Baena observes, a term lifted from Roman law in the thirteenth century. It indicated that the delegates of a “polity were invested in order to carry out the negotiations” following the words of Emperor Alexander Severus, “if a proctor appointed for one suit or business exceeds or departs from his instructions (*officium mandate*), his action cannot prejudice his principal or *dominus*.” On the contrary, if while so acting, the delegates had *plenam postestatem agendi*, the principal was bound by the agreements signed by the delegates. A special mandate was, therefore, required for the negotiators who acted as procurators for their prince...” Manzano Baena, 619-620.

autonomy of the viewer.<sup>365</sup> For the beholder was addressed not as part of a singular, dominant spatial regime, but rather as an individual outfitted with an autonomous psychology that could pursue a variety of visual paths through a group portrait. (Fig. 6) In this manner, the generic conventions of Dutch group portraiture lent themselves well to evoking a sense of the stakes of the Münster treaty: the recognition of state sovereignty as made manifest through the production of an equal ground in which representatives of both sides see themselves as being equally “recognized” on equal footing, one that extends pictorially to include the beholder as well. Moreover, Ter Borch appears in certain ways to draw on conventions developed by Dutch painters during the Twelve Year Truce that posed local militia and guard troops around a laden table. As Joanna Woodall has observed, these institutionally-commissioned paintings offer an image of peace and community through the trope of a meal shared at a table. In works like Jan Tengenagel’s *Celebration Meal of the Amsterdam Civic Guard Company of Captain Geurt van Beuningen* painted in 1613, the company assembles like Ter Borch’s to the back and the sides of what appears to be a round table so that the empty table front beckons the viewer to join. Although Tengenagel indicates hierarchy through a subtle manipulation of scale, each man at the table appears *à la* Riegl: self-possessed with an individualized facial expression and features that exude an interior, personal psychology while at the same time converging into a unified socio-political body (in this case a militia “corps”) that finds itself united most completely through the sharing of victuals at a banquet.<sup>366</sup> Their faces and minds are individual, but their bodies are connected through the metaphor and instrument of the table that also extends to the viewer.

In Ter Borch’s painting the individual portraits further find a distinct echo in the form of the contract itself. This document concludes with a page that has been signed by each of the plenipotentiaries. (Fig. 7) On the left side, the two Spanish representatives; on the right side, the eight Dutch representatives. On the even field of the paper page, each signature is accompanied by a round wax seal, two indexes of their authorization, one a name written by hand and the other, a visage-like (round) icon of the individuals’ authority on behalf of their state. These are separate “representative” bodies, conjoined through the vehicle of the flat page written upon and impressed with wax and seals on the base of the table. They have been inserted onto the neutral ground of the page, just as Ter Borch inserted faces derived from miniatures into the ground of his group portrait.<sup>367</sup> The artist has even positioned the figures in the painting in a sequence that

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<sup>365</sup> Alois Riegl, *The Group Portraiture of Holland*, trans. Evelyn M. Kain and David Britt (Los Angeles: Getty Institute 1999).

<sup>366</sup> Joanna Woodall, “Laying the Table: The Procedures of Still Life” *Art History* 35/5 (2012), 986-989. Note as well this painting is infused with Last Supper iconography: the pouring of the wine and the bread refer explicitly to Green, or Maundy Thursday in a Protestant, likely Calvinist idiom, which is to say, the Catholic ritual in which Communion is taken by the single priest in front of the assembly at the altar has been replaced by a group image with a simple table, commemorating the historic event. See Völckel, 88.

<sup>367</sup> As Kettering notes, several of the portraits were derived from miniatures that Ter Borch had been producing throughout his time in Münster. One might also observe, however, that in seventeenth-century Dutch culture, there were two traditions of painting heads: portraits and so-called “tronies.” The latter were composed initially as studies for history paintings in which the conveying of emotions and psychological effects were an artist’s priority as opposed to individual likenesses. As Frederick Schwartz has shown, however, the genres of portraiture and “tronie” painting began to converge mid-century, e.g. in the work of Rembrandt after his move to Amsterdam in the 1630s. The conflation of likeness and psychological expression in Dutch portraiture from then on begins to truly highlight the effects singled out by Riegl, as we’ve described. Just as tronies were inserted into history paintings, in the “Oath”, Ter Borch inserts portrait heads that at the same time convey a sense of psychological immediacy, bridging the genre of portrait and history painting by lending each actor a kind of personal reaction that heightens the effect of presence required for a documentary image, while also imbuing the moment with a sense of historical weight in keeping with its political importance. I would suggest that the contract, in its own way, does something similar. One

quite closely follows their position on the contract page.<sup>368</sup> A remarkable synergy emerges between the representational ground of the painting and the foundational document that grounds a new relationship between the representative actors in Ter Borch's rendering. The logic is circular: a common ground needs to be established in order for representation to appear, in the political sense, while this appearance ratifies the common grounds that enabled it to emerge in the first place. Like the table in the image's center, this conceptual loop is round, a circle with no end, an Uroboros.

The idea of the round table was, of course, hardly a seventeenth-century invention. The association of the round table with the mythical equality of King Arthur's court was firmly anchored in late medieval tradition, although in his history of medieval courts Joachim Bumke points out that this was most likely a poetic invention: as previously mentioned, courtly etiquette demanded that the sovereign occupy the highest position at table, flanked in descending order of status by his entourage.<sup>369</sup> In the Arthurian myth, however, the round table could stand in for the idea of an ideal society *inter pares*.<sup>370</sup> This itself was linked closely to an association with the Holy Grail, and the assembling at table to celebrate Pentecost, and commemorate the last supper.<sup>371</sup> Deeply buried within these Christian associations was a message of unity in difference. For, as Paul wrote in Corinthians, everyone was welcome at the proverbial Christian table who was "worthy"; the ritual meal of the Eucharist provided a symbolic round table at which all were welcome, "Jews or Greeks, freemen or slaves", "circumcised or uncircumcised" provided that they followed the teachings of Christ.<sup>372</sup>

This concept of Christian inclusivity as a means of overcoming difference undergirded many of the nascent European ideas of international peace in the seventeenth century. The most famous of these was Richelieu's notion that a "system of collective security"<sup>373</sup> ought to be implemented in order to check Habsburg ambitions of universal monarchy through the establishment of "leagues" of alliance among Christian nations.<sup>374</sup> These alliances would cross confessional lines, binding a Christian community together through the organization of a

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could associatively remark, as well, that the circularity praised as a means and marker of Enlightened individuality by philosophers such as Habermas finds an early sort of visual analogy in the roundness of the face and its analogical partner the seal in a document like the peace treaty contract and a painting like Ter Borch's. On tronie and portraits in the Dutch traditions, see Frederic Schwartz, "'The Motions of the Countenance': Rembrandt's Early Portraits and the Tronie" *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 17/18 (1989), 89-116.

<sup>368</sup> An exception here is Johan de Knuyt, who was Zeeland's representative, but who had been recalled to the United Provinces before the signing took place. Godard van Reede, the representative from Utrecht, is also missing since his Province – not United with the others, on this occasion – had forbidden him from signing the agreement (his signature was subsequently added and is thus "out of line" in the treaty). See Thomasson. On Utrecht's problems with the treaty, see Manzano Baena, 629.

<sup>369</sup> See Werber and Thomas Rahn, "Herrschaft der Zeichen. Zum Zeremoniell als »Zeichensystem«" in Hans Ottomeyer/Michaela Völkel eds., *Die öffentliche Tafel. Tafelzeremoniell in Europa, 1300–1900*, (Wolfenbüttel/Berlin: Ed. Minerva/Deutsches Historisches Museum, 2002), 22–31.

<sup>370</sup> Joachim Bumke, *Höfische Kultur. Literatur und Gesellschaft im hohen Mittelalter* vol. 1. Munich: (1990) 18. Cited in Werber, 123.

<sup>371</sup> Rigotti, 291. Werber, *ibid.*

<sup>372</sup> Paul (1 Corinthians 12, 12-13) cited in Werber 125 and "In Christus gilt weder Beschneidung noch Unbeschnittensein." (Galater, 6, 15). *Ibid.*

<sup>373</sup> Klaus Malettke, "Richelieus Außenpolitik und sein System kollektiver Sicherheit," in *Kontinuität und Wandel in der Staatenordnung der Neuzeit: Beiträge zur Geschichte des internationalen Systems*, ed. Peter Krüger (Lit Verlag: Marburg, 1991), 47-68.

<sup>374</sup> Rainer Babel, "L'assurance de la paix avant Richelieu: quelques repères." *discussions* 4 (2010), unpaginated.

multilateral architecture of peace maintained through an official procedure of arbitration.<sup>375</sup> One of the achievements of the Westphalian congress was that it was able to, in some ways, lay the groundwork of this vision. Ter Borch's image embodies this emergent implementation of a peace "system" held in check by contract across confessional lines. The round table serves as a potent reminder of this unification of difference under the umbrella of potential Christian unity. That, Ter Borch's image suggests, is the "wonder" of the event he portrays. As in Albrecht Dürer's woodcut of the last supper (the ninth print in his *Small Passion*, 1511), the round table here serves to miraculously assemble the diverse community, which will find ultimate fulfillment in the descent of the Holy Spirit (in multiple tongues and languages) at Pentecost.<sup>376</sup>(Fig. 8)

Gazing upward from the round table in Ter Borch's representation of the *Friedensaal*, we find the round form of the table echoed visually in the circular candelabra, crowned with the wooden sculpture of the Virgin in her guise as the *Immaculata*. Mary's golden mandorla sheds light on the wondrous event below: the end of an eighty year war and the contractual establishment of an order that bridges Protestants and Catholics while recognizing their respective autonomy (different "tongues") and the parity of their claims to sovereign representation. A circle has been built, one which existed "before" in the teaching of Christ and in the Arthurian round table, but which has been resurrected for a new, golden age in the form of the circular table that operationalizes early modern diplomacy. In this manner we can see how both the rectangular painting and the rectangular peace treaty are part of a circular process, symbolized by the table, which simultaneously provides a *kulturtechnik* for conjoining the multiple registers of both ground—as excavated above—and, of course, of figures.<sup>377</sup>

Ter Borch's visual composition, to recall, beckons us, the viewers, to the table which in a sense is completed by our presence. Here is where the copper support of Ter Borch's painting suddenly can be seen as serving a crucial role. Ter Borch may have packed the painting away with him like a precious souvenir analogous to the treaties in their velvet and silver boxes,<sup>378</sup> but

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<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

<sup>376</sup> Werber, 123. One must note, however, that the different Christian sects had different concepts of the Last Supper (Green, or Maundy Thursday – Maundy meaning commandment, from the Latin *mandatum*) and its "enactment" in religious service. For Catholics, communion was taken only a couple times a year, though the Eucharist was performed by the priest in front of the assembly at the altar during mass; the ritual famously serves as an embodiment, through transubstantiation, of Christ's sacrifice. For Lutherans, communion marks a shared meal in which Christ is present in the form of bread and wine whereby the status of Christ as victim is recalled through cultic memory and his somewhat more mitigated presence. Calvinists and the followers of Zwingli, on the other hand, held that rituals taking of bread and wine merely commemorated the historical event of the Last Supper. This is why the protestant altar often presented itself as a literal table instead of a marble, or otherwise heavily elaborated stone slab as in Catholic churches. See Michaela Völkel, "Der Tisch des Herrn" in *Zeichen und Raum. Ausstattung und höfisches Zeremoniell in den deutschen Schlössern der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Peter-Michael Hahn and Ulrich Schütte (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2006), 83–101. It would seem that Ter Borch's table, however, was capacious enough to accommodate a variety of interpretations, "smoothing" over conflict, thanks to its recasting as a diplomatic instrument rather than a literal depiction of Christ's Thursday commandment. On tables and conflict avoidance, see Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, "Ordnungsleistung und Konflikträchtigkeit der höfischen Tafel" in Ibid., 103–122.

<sup>377</sup> Writing of the "Divine counsellor" in his *Enchiridion*, Erasmus describes his golden crown in terms that resonate with our analysis, "Lastly, this counsellor is wreathed in a crown of gold, for gold in the sacred Scripture usually represents wisdom, and the circle signifies perfect wisdom, complete in all its parts." Erasmus, 43.

<sup>378</sup> Like the treaty boxes lying on the table in the image, Ter Borch's painting could be easily taken under the arm and carried off, which is precisely what the artist did when he returned home from Münster with his painting – and he held onto it for the rest of his life. It seems as though it remained, for him, a memento of this grounding moment that he wanted to keep, since he gave it the exorbitant (and deliberately unsaleable) price of fl 6,000, as his later biographer Arnold Houbraken recorded. Kettering, 42. The Dutch took their copy of the peace contract (the copy

he clearly designed the image with the intent of having it engraved and distributed widely immediately after the event. By 1650 reproductions of Ter Borch's painting were ready: in that year the Haarlem engraver Jonas Suyderhof had finished a printed version that Ter Borch could offer to the town of Kampen (harvesting profits from the flourishing of the arts in a time of peace: twenty-three prints for 100 fl.).<sup>379</sup> (Fig. 9) The prints circulated widely and, through the process of circulation, they built upon the dynamics at work in the image. The print on paper can, on one hand, be seen as further highlighting the conflation between image and treaty that Ter Borch's image intimated through the visual strategies discussed above.<sup>380</sup> On the other, the circulation of prints of the event to a broad and multi-lingual, multi-confessional audience brought readers from worlds apart metaphorically and materially to the same table, the one in the painting that figured them as observers all beckoned to the same ground. An audience avid for news of current events could thereby participate in the construction of a new European order through the process of collecting these paper representations.

This broad audience could own Ter Borch's group portrait, but also could collect individual portraits of the separate representational "heads". Some of these portraits were based on Ter Borch's miniatures, others on likenesses by artists like Anselmus van Hulle, who also produced miniature portraits of diplomats during the Congress and related subsequent events in Nuremberg and Regensburg.<sup>381</sup> Volumes of these portraits were published immediately after the congress, for example in the collection *Pacis antesignani sive icons legatorum plena potestate instructorum* [...] in which readers could find likenesses of all of the envoys who had worked to produce the peace agreements at Westphalia. These collections were consistently updated as new congresses took place in the seventeenth century, such that van Hulle's convolute had grown by 1696 to include a whopping 132 pages of faces framed in roundels and labeled with names, like the "figures" on the peace treaty embodied by wax seals and signatures. The 1696 volume was entitled, "*Pacificatores Orbis Christiani, sive Icones Principum, Ducum et Lagorum qui Monasterii atque Osnabrugae Pacem Europae reconciliarunt,*" or peace-makers of the Christian world. These portraits formed almost a kind of family album that purchasers could "join," and which they could observe growing over time.<sup>382</sup> This family was, at least in terms of visual rhetoric, the diverse but unified Christian family of Ter Borch's round table, which had now completed its circle by extending its neutral ground to an ever-expanding community of anonymous and autonomous bodies. These bodies may have been worlds apart, but they were

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stored in the silver and red velvet Spanish case, received in exchange from the Spanish after the oath) back to their new, officially sovereign state and stored it at the secretariat of the States General where it eventually ended up in the secret cupboard (*secrete kas*) in the assembly room of Their Noble Great Mightinesses of the United Provinces. There, held in secret, it remained a marker not only of the document's preciousness in terms representing a foundational moment in the state's history, but also evinced a desire to control informational access related to aspects of the treaty, so that a particular reading could be preserved. Thomassen, 478-480.

<sup>379</sup> Kettering, 37-39.

<sup>380</sup> The print was the same size as the painting, which as we've seen was also analogous in scale to the paper contract.

<sup>381</sup> Manegold, 47.

<sup>382</sup> To a certain extent contemporary images of the EU continue to draw on this visual tradition. For a recent interpretation of the European Union in terms of a family album see Matthias Belafi, "The European Union as a Family? The Family Photos of the European Council as a Representation of the European Union" in *United in Visual Diversity: Images and Counter-Images of Europe*, ed. Benjamin Drechsel and Claus Leggewie (Innsbruck/Wien: Studien Verlag, 2010), 92-103.

bound together conceptually and materially through the horizontal (table-like) ground of Ter Borch's *matrix* for peace.<sup>383</sup>

*Ibi est firma pax, ubi sunt voluntarii pacati: an enduring ground*<sup>384</sup>

Through its wide distribution, Ter Borch's deceptively straightforward (as I have been arguing) image became an immediate success, a common ground upon which all subsequent Western images of peace congresses in the documentary mode would be based. The painting made peace appear to be so complete, so easy, so circular, and self-evident, perhaps in part through the ways in which its elements of historically accurate "reportage" subtly incorporated the symbolic elements analyzed above.<sup>385</sup> Ter Borch's table – like the peace it appears to simultaneously facilitate and embody – presented itself as a *fait accompli*, a balance achieved by coming "full circle." It visually appeared to expunge conflict from its ground(s), persuasively arguing for its vision of non-hierarchical balance bolstered by the tethering of passions into a neutral middle ground.<sup>386</sup> The signs of labor that went into producing both the physical table and the labor of peace that the table metaphorically represents simply do not appear. The moment of the table is the moment that one circle/cycle closes and a new cycle begins, but the belabored production (literally years in the making in Westphalia) remain occluded; how could they appear in an object that announces its program as clearly as a round table, whose promise of inclusivity banishes awareness that inclusivity can only be the result of particular exclusions?

This ability of the table to appear so obvious and unified is what Karl Marx would later highlight in *Capital*, where as we have seen the table takes center stage in his analysis of the commodity fetish. Marx writes, "A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties."<sup>387</sup> It is then that he offers the example of what we have termed the "overlooked" table. This table is made of wood, and although it continues to serve a use function, as a commodity its production process cordons the table off: "so soon as it steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than "table-turning" ever was."<sup>388</sup> In the

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<sup>383</sup> We are reminded again of the holiest matrix/mother of all, who presides over all of the wondrous layers of Ter Borch's image in the figure of the Virgin made in Malines that perches upon the candelabra. It is also interesting to note that in certain allegorical images of early modern peace congresses like the frontispiece for Casimir Freschot's *Histoire du congrès et de la paix d'Utrecht, comme aussi de celle de Rastadt et de Bade* (1716), one can find the figure of *Historia* writing down the events that transpire as if on a stage (in the background), while Cupid *binds* the pages together with a thread and needle so that they form a coherent body of information such as that contained in Freschot's published account. The visual metaphor of binding stands in here for both the process of narration as well as the establishment of an "imagined community," to use Benedict Anderson's term, of readers bound together through a shared readership. (Fig. 9)

<sup>384</sup> "Where peace is firm, there treaties are concluded voluntarily." Justus Lipsius, cited in Croxton, 384.

<sup>385</sup> For example, does the Virgin's presence in the circular candelabra simply signal the image's historical veracity, or does it serve simultaneously to highlight specific conceptual premises? I have been suggesting that it does both and, moreover, that the symbolic meaning infuses the documentary mode with added meaning while the documentary furnishes the symbolic mode with added authority.

<sup>386</sup> Just as Weickmann's emotional spasms were banished under the table.

<sup>387</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch01.htm#S1>, last accessed September 19, 2019.

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*

case of the early modern table of state, the metaphysical, mysterious quality of the object is not so much that it appears as part of a commodity landscape, but instead that it grounds a new vision of a political landscape. It can perhaps be said to have *prefigured* a vision of a modern state system in which autonomous states are bound together in a common interest in peace through systems of nominally non-hierarchical alliances, overseen by the authority of a shared set of rules akin to modern international law.<sup>389</sup> The table served as a visual embodiment for this idea, not only because it provided a center and a balanced plane that bridged and separated those seated around it simultaneously (performatively offering them “boundaries”), but also because the table as an object can only stand up and remain balanced if each of its individual legs work together. They only maintain an equilibrium above the ground if they are the same length and if each separate leg collaborates with the others, attaching itself firmly to the table’s top and, thereby, submitting itself to a common regime that both maintains and depends upon the uprightness of its individual parts.<sup>390</sup> Early modern allegorical images of peace sometimes made this metaphorical table manifest without actually showing a table. For example, in the anonymous engraving *Augurium Pacis*, published the same year as Ter Borch’s print, we see an allegorical triumph scene, with peace driving a chariot. Instead of the six horses of an ambassador’s coach, Peace is driven by four steeds. (Fig. 10) Each one of these sports a coat of arms on its chest, indicating that it is one of four great European powers: France, Spain, Sweden, and the Empire. In order for peace to reign, the four must be tethered together; the newly dug ground that Peace traverses – maintained by a gentleman to her right, who sports a shovel instead of a sword – supports four individual columns, one for each of the horses. Like the legs of a table, the columns Patriotism, Rationality, Amnesty, and Neutrality buttress a new heavenly order in which “nothing is better than the middle ground” (*medio tutissimus ibis*) and nothing more secure than a simulated boundary (*nec ullius certior simulatum terminus*). The table’s top has disappeared, vaulted up to the sky, to reveal the ground below much as in Ter Borch’s “documentary” image where the representation of the physical table translates the allegorical symbolism of the middle ground into a material object presided over by the Virgin on high in heaven. Moreover, the table as a metaphor for statecraft implied a nascent sense that states could exist as entities whose stability could be defined spatially through international rule-making, rather than temporally through genealogy: the “Dutch” or “French” seat at a table, as on a map, could be shored up not *only* by the institution of hereditary monarchy, but also by a rotating set of professional diplomats. These diplomats would change, but the horizontal table would remain to welcome the replacements who would continue the work of their predecessors.

By the early eighteenth century, this image of Westphalia that Ter Borch’s painting so gracefully embodied had already come to serve as a common touchstone (or foundation) for European historians eager to determine the *grounding* moment of a new European political order. This was particularly true for historians of protocol and ceremonial etiquette since these were two of the key elements that went into producing peace, hinged as it was upon agreeing on the parameters of the common ground upon which negotiations could take place (who entered a

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<sup>389</sup> For good measure, we might add that a truly modern notion of this constellation would include a regular timetable of peace conferences and congresses to ensure a continuity of the peaceful order (a desire to seek security rather than change). This imperative would only develop, however, in the nineteenth century. See Richard Langhorne, “The Development of International Conferences, 1648-1830” in *Studies in History and Politics: Special Issue, Diplomatic Thought 1648-1815*, 2 (1981/1982) 61-91.

<sup>390</sup> See Wolfgang Harms ed. *Deutsche illustrierte Flugblätter des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*. Kommentierte Ausgabe. 4. Bde. Tübingen bzw. München 1980-1989, Bd. 4, ed., Image 255.

space first, where they stood in relation to one another, who was seated where, and so on).<sup>391</sup> Seventy years after the event, Johann Christian Lünig wrote, for example, that the ceremony that accompanied the Westphalian negotiations had proved literally fundamental for international diplomatic ceremonial in the future (“*erst auf rechten festen Fuß gesetzt worden*”).<sup>392</sup> This hagiography of the Westphalian congress, however, belies the fact that not only was the term “ceremony” *not* used at Westphalia,<sup>393</sup> but more importantly, conflicts over ceremony threatened to undermine any attempt in Westphalia at reaching an agreement. The treaties signed there did usher in a new period of international relations (though historians are wary today of labelling it as a *caesura*), one in which an initial move is made toward a secularization of international relations and formalization of the role of the ambassador, as well as a state system in which contractual particularism triumphs over universal monarchic ambitions. Yet it also offered, as historian Niels May has observed, a negative example for international relations precisely because finding a common ground in Westphalia proved nearly impossible.<sup>394</sup>

In terms of Ter Borch’s image and our table, for example, one might note that contrary to the enduring image provided in the painting, meetings between the Spanish and the Dutch delegates at Münster did not take place in a formal, public setting like the *Friedensaal*. They also did not occur around tables. Instead, they were held in private lodgings. When the Dutch went to Peñaranda’s quarters, he *did* provide them with tables, but they were not used to negotiate with “the other side.” On the contrary, the delegations withdrew to private chambers outfitted with tables in order to discuss how they would proceed within the homogeneous circle of the delegation group.<sup>395</sup> Prior to signing the treaty, the Spanish collated all of the documents (a process that took six hours) and placed them into tightly sealed envelopes, one for their party and one for the Dutch: the public openness of Ter Borch’s depiction stood in contradistinction to the actually very private and complex processes through which peace was fabricated in Münster and Osnabrück, even though the ratification ceremony we see in his image was re-performed for a larger public on a platform placed in front of the Münster *Rathaus* on the subsequent day so that everyone could see.<sup>396</sup> Both painting and performance were, in a way, rehearsals for an idea of what peace could look like in the future. In this sense they offered a groundwork, or foundation upon which (to use Lünig’s turn of phrase) a foot could be solidly placed.

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<sup>391</sup> We should keep in mind how deadly conflicts over precedence could be. In the infamous carriage incident of September 30, 1661 in London (the “*affaire du pas*”), French and Spanish delegations came to bullets and blows over the question of who would follow the newly arrived Swedish ambassador, each side insisting on their claim to precedence, i.e. riding directly behind the Swedish envoy. According to Samuel Pepys, several Frenchman, two Spaniards and an Englishman lost their lives in the skirmish. See Pepys’ diary:

<https://www.pepysdiary.com/diary/1661/09/30/>, last accessed September 19, 2019.

<sup>392</sup> In his *Compendium Juris Publici Regni Moderni Germanici* (1731), Johann Jacob Moser concurred, the Westphalian peace was crucial in setting the constitutional ground stone for a modern (German) state because of what it meant in terms of building a ceremonial common ground (*teils auf einen sicheren theils auf einen anderen Fuß gesetzt worden ist*.” Bernhard Jahn, “Ceremoniel und Friedensordnung. Das Ceremoniel als Störfaktor und Katalysator bei den Verhandlungen zum Westfälischen Frieden,” in *Erfahrung und Deutung von Krieg und Frieden. Religion - Geschlechter - Natur und Kultur*, eds. Klaus Garber, Jutta Held, et al. (Munich: Fink, 2001), 969. Modern historians continued to promote this idea of Westphalia as a “grounding” event: In his *Volkerrechtsgeschichte*, Karl Heinz Ziegler, for instance, calls the contracts of Münster and Osnabrück “gewissermaßen das Grundgesetz dieses europäischen öffentlichen Rechts.” Steiger, 33. The rhetorical recourse to “feet” itself offers an analogy to the legs (and feet) of the table.

<sup>393</sup> May 33.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>395</sup> Croxton, 167.

<sup>396</sup> Poelhekke 533-4, 538-39.



That said, Westphalia, as one might surmise, was so riddled by arguments over precedence – not least between the Dutch and their allies the French who found the Dutch insistence on equal status with Venice hard to swallow even though the Dutch alliance was a cornerstone of French foreign policy – that it did not facilitate communication, but actually augmented its complexity.<sup>397</sup> The list of complaints, conflicts, and embarrassments is extensive. Tellingly, for instance, the Papal mediator Fabio Chigi complained bitterly about the ringing of bells that signified the Spanish/Dutch treaty (detrimental to Catholic interests, he thought). He would have gone somewhere else if he had known there would be an official celebration, he grumbled. Chigi's reaction implies a few things of interest to our discussion. One is that, as we've noted, negotiations at Westphalia were often troubled by issues both of precedence and the hotly debated role of mediators. Chigi himself could never meet with Protestant parties at Westphalia, which obviously proved a problem when it came to negotiating a cross-confessional agreement. Similarly, the models for ceremony and precedence used at all-Catholic peace congresses prior to Westphalia (the famous Councils, like that at Trent) imposed a hierarchy that could not be applied to the current situation. For the traditional ceremonial order of Rome was a vertical model that could neither accommodate newly powerful Protestant monarchies like Sweden, nor republics like the United Provinces. Nor was it enough to neutralize the congress space. The two Westphalian cities of Münster and Osnabrück were freed of Imperial control for the duration of the negotiations, so that they technically formed a neutral zone.<sup>1</sup> But an officially declared neutral zone did little to resolve problems stemming from disputes over rank in a situation wherein there existed no clear precedent upon which to base hierarchical claims. The largest problems in this regard occurred between the French and the Spanish throughout the conference. Indeed, the two parties never were able to meet and war continued between them for eleven years after the treaty agreements signed between other parties in 1648. But allied parties sometimes experienced even more troubles in regard to meeting than did enemies. For example, the Spanish who – as Ter Borch recorded – were quick to create a common ground with their Dutch enemies in order to break apart the latter's alliance with France as well as gain time and save resources while faced with pressing domestic concerns in Iberia. Yet one of the principle reasons behind the double site of the congress (in Münster and Osnabrück) was not because of confessional issues, but rather because the allies France and Sweden could not agree upon issues of ceremonial precedence. On one hand, they had contracted themselves to pursue negotiations with the Habsburgs and their allies together in order to strengthen their collective position. On the other hand, however, Swedish claims to supersede France in the ceremonial order were unacceptable to a French delegation whose primary mandate was to insist upon absolute precedence above all other monarchies, behind the Pope and the Emperor in keeping with Roman tradition. The Spanish, in fact, had suggested that the conference be held as a multilateral event at a round table – and even the French envoy Claude de Mesmes, Comte d'Avaux had proposed in 1644 that issues of rank be dropped in order to facilitate peace negotiations; but these suggestions were quickly dismissed.

How could one resolve this situation? One pre-Westphalian model was the Treaty of Vervins (signed between the French and Spanish in 1598, through Papal mediation). In Vervins, territory had also been neutralized and the problem of precedence was resolved by the fact that since the French were the hosts, the Spanish took the spot of honor on the right side of the symbolic and literal table. This solution, however, did not offer itself as a model in Westphalia

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<sup>397</sup> May offers a useful and succinct review of this process. See May, especially 179-202 for the status issue related to the Venetians and the Dutch.

since there were neither hosts nor guests and a multilateral, international meeting couldn't be resolved in this manner anyway, since there would be competing claims to precedence among the various participants. New solutions, many developed *ad hoc*, needed to be rehearsed. In the case of the Swedes and the French, numerous proposals were floated to facilitate meeting. The Swedish envoy Axel Oxenstierna suggested, for instance, that they draw lots in order to avoid conflict over which party would honor the other with the ceremony of the "first visit," preferring the neutrality of contingency to the likelihood that discussions would simply never be able to take place if such matters could not be resolved (this, in turn, would derail the decision that the Swedes and the French would only act jointly at Westphalia). Not wanting to leave their claims to chance, however, the French pushed through a compromise that involved devising a neutral spatial groundwork together with an agreement on rules about how to move upon that ground: "*de deux maisons qui sont rencontrées proche l'une de l'autre environ à my chemin d'icy à Osnaburg, nous avons le choix de la plus belle qui est sur la main droite en entrant, un mesme chemin conduisant à toutes les deux. Ils y arriveront les premiers affin de nous rendre la première visite qui a esté le point où s'est rencontré jusque icy la plus grande difficulté.*"<sup>398</sup> One wonders, however, whether the Swedes could also claim that their *maison* was on the right, if they were approaching from the other direction. Such a meeting followed the bridge/barrier model of medieval times, implementing it as a foundation for an alliance in which the only certainty that would guarantee negotiations came from a combination of an agreement upon a neutral spatial ground and a shared set of rules palatable to each party.

Numerous anecdotes from Westphalia illustrate what occurred when a compromise over ground and ground rules for engagement was not reached. Delegates simply did not show up: for example, the Spanish did not officially greet the Venetian ambassador Contarini upon his arrival, claiming that they had not received notice that he was coming as a smokescreen for hiding the fact that they did not want to submit themselves to a potentially humiliating conflict with the French over precedence.<sup>399</sup> Ter Borch's table can, thus, be seen as offering a happy alternative, one which could displace, or "table", the individual interests and stakes of the delegations (in this case as a *tableau*, or image of a table whose flat surface was analogous to the table's top). Like Marx's commodity table, Ter Borch's green, velvet clad instrument takes center stage in his painting, stepping forth with its feet firmly planted on the ground offering an apparently obvious and simple solution: complexity reduced to the circular, flat form of a condensed neutral ground; a solution apparently free from the difficulties that accompanied its production.<sup>400</sup>

A curious thing happened subsequently. Just as historians only fifty years after the ratifications of the Westphalian treaties were already regarding the congress as a new European

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<sup>398</sup> May, 114.

<sup>399</sup> On French diplomacy and wrangling over status see especially, see especially Rohrschneider and Anushka Tischer. *Französische Diplomatie und Diplomaten auf dem Westfälischen Friedenskongress: Außenpolitik unter Richelieu und Mazarin* (Münster: Aschendorff) 1999. On Vervins as a precedent see Colegrove, 476 and May, 112. On the French-Sweden discussions, see May, 11?. On the French-Dutch conflicts over status see Dickmann, 209 and May 193-202.

<sup>400</sup> Perhaps Weickmann's game provided an apt metaphor for this table as well since all of the players gathered at table operated upon a common ground defined both spatially and by the prior acceptance of the rules of engagement. Both aspects of laying a ground needed to operate in tandem in order for a kind of collective intentionality to develop. Mazarin, an avid gambler who aimed to reintroduce the lottery into France to raise money for the state coffers, was maybe on the mark when he described diplomacy in terms of gaming in a letter to the plenipotentiaries at Westphalia, D'Avaux and Serviens: "it is no small skill to quit the game when one is winning, because one secures his gain and can count that which remains among his possessions." They, in turn, responded, "France is doing so well in this war that we only need to continue playing as we have been." Cited in Croxton, 376.

foundation (“*Grundgesetz*”), so too did Ter Borch’s table reproduce itself in images of future peace congresses. In this manner, it offered a foundational, medial ground that accompanied the enshrining of Westphalia as a conceptual ground for a new international “system” of peace (even though the Spanish-Dutch peace treaty was, strictly speaking, *not* included in the official body of Westphalian treaties).<sup>401</sup> Perhaps one can go so far as to suggest that Ter Borch’s image proved ultimately to be the stronger influence in establishing an idea of Westphalia as a *grounding* moment in the collective, European political imagination. For the ground it offered was more easily graspable than the complexities of the legal and political developments that accompanied peace congresses that followed Westphalia – although the two aspects (legal and image) operated to a certain extent in tandem. Its table offered an image that could be built upon: the table *in* the depicted room and the image itself served as a solid *tabula rasa* to build a new collective political imaginary.<sup>402</sup>

Hence the image began to multiply rapidly. Suyderhoef’s print after Ter Borch’s “model” was just the tip of the iceberg. An anonymous print published by Rombout van den Hoeye, for instance, depicted the exchange of the ratifications in the same room on the same day as Ter Borch, but shifted the image in order to convey a different political point: the Dutch delegation now sits at the table, which has moved to the left (into “their” side of the room, if we orient ourselves through Ter Borch) while the Spanish delegates approach the table to the right. In terms of table etiquette, the Dutch thereby have gained the upper hand since they are seated and continue to wear their hats, while the Spanish have removed their headgear and remain standing.<sup>403</sup> (Fig. 11) Changes to the matrix were, however, not always necessary. Thirty years later, the Amsterdam publisher Johannes Stichter printed an image commemorating the signing of the treaty of Nijmegen between Spain, the Netherlands, and France (10 August, 1678).<sup>404</sup> (Fig. 12) Instead of designing a new image specifically tailored to Nijmegen, Stichter chose simply to have Ter Borch’s image reproduced as a rough woodcut and added updated coats of arms in order to signify the new treaty partners. Because public expectations were already attuned to Ter Borch’s matrix, the specificities of Nijmegen and other treaties that directly referenced Westphalia mattered less than the “establishing shot” associated with peace negotiations writ large. Here, we can see also how the table assumes its role as a *kulturtechnik*, for it is a basis that assembles states as abstractions represented by a changing cast of characters (vs. a specific genealogically oriented figural representation) around its horizontal surface: a byword, by this point, for peace (in the form of an image).

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<sup>401</sup> These concluded separate peace agreements between Spain, Austria, Sweden, the Holy Roman Empire states, and France as well as their *confoederates et adhaerentes*. On who was included in the treaties see Steiger, 36-48.

<sup>402</sup> The treaties themselves enshrined the notion of a *tabula rasa*, or *caesura* in the status quo of war through the inclusion of oblivion clauses: “*Sit utrinque perpetua oblivion et amnestia omnium eorum, quae ab initio horum motuum quocunque loco modove ab una vel altera parte ultro citroque hostiliter facta sunt.*” (That there be on both sides a perpetual Oblivion and Amnesty of all that has been done since the beginning of these Troubles, in what Place or in what Manner soever Hostilities may have been exercis’d by the one or the other Party.”) *Instrumentum Pacis Osnabrugensis* (The Peace Treaty of Osnabrück), *Acta Pacis Westphalicae* (The Peace Treaties of Westphalia), 24 October, 1684 article 2. See <http://www.pax-westphalica.de/index.html> last accessed September 20, 2019. On the oblivion clause see Jane O. Newman, “Perpetual Oblivion: Remembering Westphalia in a Post-Secular Age,” in *Forgetting Faith? Negotiating Confessional Conflict in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Isabel Karremann, Cornel Zwierlein, Inga Mai Groot (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 261-278.

<sup>403</sup> Manegold, 55.

<sup>404</sup> Anonymous published by Johannes Stichter (Amsterdam), “*Waerachtigh Vreede ende Vreudge gesangh[...]*” Manegold, 53.

Simultaneously, in Nijmegen, a number of the treaties concluded referred specifically to the Westphalian agreements. In the contracts of 29 March and 2 February, 1679 the treaty of Münster is named as a “*solidissimum hujus mutuae amicitiae tranquillitatisque publicae fundamentum*,” while the treaty of Osnabrück is described as a “*firma basis ac omnimoda norma hujus Pacificationis*” and a “*lex fundamentalis*.”<sup>405</sup> These contracts performed the same task as the repetition of Ter Borch’s image in Stichter’s print, albeit as a speech act written – with considerably more political gravitas – into a contractual agreement. The founding act, or foregrounding, of the Westphalian treaties conflates with the writing surface of the table in the images. Both form a basis for a legal-political imaginary that builds upon the flat *tabula* (understood in terms of a legal tablet and a literal table) as a grounding site for an equilibrium between modern European states, a *firma basis*. Indeed, the treaty of Nijmegen took the peace agreements of Westphalia and made the status of the agreed peace into a “*norma*”<sup>406</sup> that needed to be reestablished. War, in this schema, was not the normal state. Instead, the norm was the agreed upon, legally binding peace that the contracts reestablished by reining in the states and binding them to one surface, like delinquent legs of a table that needed to be nailed back to the top so that all of them could stand properly. Twenty years later at the Congress of Rijswijk, a similar operation was re-performed. Only it was then, on 30 October, 1697, that a contract made mention not of Münster and Osnabrück, but specifically of the *Pax Westphalica* for the first time: the two treaties melted into one denoted by the term “Westphalia,” something repeated at Utrecht (1713), where the treaties also mentioned the “*Traitez de Westphalie*”.<sup>407</sup> In this manner, a kind of grounding moment was collated together as a multi-media – and multilateral – project.

During this process tables crept slowly, but surely, into the focus of how diplomatic events were staged and imagined. To a certain extent, the concern over making a neutral ground in the Medieval and Renaissance sense described previously remained a priority. During the Peace of the Pyrenees in 1658-59, for instance, the Spanish and the French found it difficult to decide upon an opportune site to meet in order to hammer out and seal the peace.<sup>408</sup> Famously, to resolve the situation, they built a structure on the neutralized ground of the *Ile de la Conférence* in the Bidassoa river. In the middle of the temporary structure stood a table, directly over the midpoint like a bridge-barrier of yore.<sup>409</sup> At Rijswijk, numerous commentators hailed the

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<sup>405</sup> Steiger, 59-60. Emphasis mine.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid, 61.

<sup>408</sup> Don Luis De Haro made several suggestions, including a moving vehicle (Mazarin favored a convent); since *Premier Ministres* (unlike plenipotentiaries) could not cross into opponents territory, a solution would have to found in which they could meet on neutral territory, in the middle. See Daniel Séré, *La paix des Pyrénées: vingt-quatre ans de négociations entre la France et l’Espagne (1635 – 1659)* (Paris : Champion, 2007), 444-446.

<sup>409</sup> Gottfried von Stieve described the situation as follows, attending carefully to the form of the building, the furnishings, and the ways in which separation and communication were enabled as part of an architectural program that one might term an architecture of the border, “Von beyden Seiten wurden Schiff=Brücken oben mit einem Dache verfertigt, an denselben waren Säle für die Gardes-Corps und Trabanten, und an diesen Sälen drey Antichambres für die Hof=Officiers und Bedienten: aus der letztem oder vornehmsten derselben gieng man in den Conferentz-Saal, welcher acht und vierzig Schuh lang, vier und zwanzig breit, und zwanzig hoch, in der Mitte des Getäffels aber eine Linie war, durch welche das Spanische Gebiete von dem Frantzösischen bemercket wurde. *Unter dieser Linie stund ein mäßiger viereckichter Tisch, halb auf jener halb auf dieser Seite, und beyderseits zwey Stühle à bras: welcher Tisch und Stühle für die zwey Könige, die, wie wir weiter hören werden, dahin kamen, zubereitet war.* Denn in der Conferentz der beyden Ministrorum selbst waren zwey Stühle gesetzt, einer auf der Spanischen, der andere auf der Frantzösischen Seite: und zwar auf zwey ausgebreitete Teppiche von unterschiedlichem Muster. Nebst diesen Stühlen stund rechter Seite ein kleiner Tisch, und auf demselbigen ein Schreib=Zeug, und war alles in einer vollkommenen Gleichheit. An diesem Saale Mitternachtswerts waren zwey Cabinets, in welche man sich näch

perfection of the grounds and the baroque Huis ter Nieuwburg where the peace congress took place. In his *Actes et Mémoires des Négociations de la Paix de Ryswick* (1707), Jacques Bernard extolls that the location “a été faite exprès pour y traiter de la Paix” because of the way in which it was located halfway between Delft and The Hague and because its symmetry allowed the French to enter the building from one side and the Allies from the other: each party could approach the *huis* through separately organized bridges and entrances erected in the garden.<sup>410</sup> In prints celebrating the event, this interest in the ground made itself apparent through the inclusion of ground plans, elevations, and maps of the baroque palace and its gardens (Bernard’s three volume book set had a fold-out variation). In Laurens Scherm’s 1687 print *Gedenkteken van de Vrede van Rijswijk*, elevations of Nieuwburg from front and back rest atop the collection of conference images assembled below. (Fig. 13) These location images again offer a kind of establishing shot, grounding the conference in a specific place before proceeding into the interior, where each room is shown having a table (Bernard listed these tables individually in his description as well: a long table for the allies, an oval table for the mediators, etc.).<sup>411</sup> Bernard even reprinted images of the table used in Nijmegen to sign the peace, again using that precedent as a table-like basis for the peace which would return Europe to the ideal state set out by the Westphalian agreements in the same way that the treaties themselves built upon one another through their referential wording.<sup>412</sup> (Fig. 14)

The increasing focus on tables in such images can be explained by the growing desire to mitigate problems associated with precedence and ceremonial etiquette.<sup>413</sup> The object of the table streamlined communication by moving parties into direct proximity. The table ground would replace the ground outside as peace-making and diplomacy became increasingly interiorized, a process depicted in prints like Scherm’s. In Utrecht, even seating arrangements were to be terminated. Diplomats were to enter the main room in the town hall by the door connected to their individual apartments, but once inside the common space their placement was to follow the

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Gelegenheit retiriren kunte: zu Ende des grossen ConferentzSaales war noch ein Sallon in Form eines ungleichen und verstümmelten Triangels für die Herren Coloma und Lionne, welche das Amt der Secretarien verwalteten, und dann eine Galerie der Communication. Der übrige Raum der Insul, welcher von dem Gebäude nicht war eingenommen worden, wurde auf Instantz des Don Louis de Haro just in der Mitte mit Brettern verschlagen, etwan ein hundert und sechzig Fuß lang damit die Spanier und Frantzosen nicht sotten können zusammen gehen, und etwan Ungelegenheit anfangen [ ... ]. Stieve, *Europaisches Hof=Ceremoniell*, 497f, cited in Rahn, 182. Emphasis mine.

<sup>410</sup> Jacques Bernard, *Actes et Mémoires des Négociations de la Paix de Ryswick* vol. 2 (The Hague: Adrian Moetjens, 1707), ii.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid, iii.

<sup>412</sup> In Scherm’s print, the Ter Borch image is no longer featured in the middle of the documentation, but instead spreads itself around the sides in the vignettes of the negotiators’ chambers. In the center, however, we find an allegorical depiction of peace with her cornucopia of plenty buttressed by a different kind of *Tafel*: the pedestal/altar upon which Pax is seated is a blank tablet, ready to be inscribed with a new declaration of peace, one negotiated at the tables depicted on the print’s left and right sides but established as a basis and norm in 1648.

<sup>413</sup> In Nijmegen the English mediators proposed, for example, to get rid of official public entries, “To which End, We think it were well, that as We will not that you yourselves do make any Public Entry at Nimequen, so you should prevail with the several Ambassadors and Plenipotentiaries, as they shall unite, to decline any such solemn Entries, for the avoiding Contests for Predecendy, usual upon such Occasions.” Cited in May, 215. By Rijswijk, the Spanish King allowed the “excellency” ambassadorial title to be granted to the *Reichstände* for the first time prior to the conference, while the Swedes there attempted to translate this into a general rule: deciding on issues of protocol before arriving at the meeting would streamline communication and allow the parties to progress more swiftly to a solution. Official entries, first visits, all of those subjects of struggle for preeminence on the ground *outside* of the negotiating room were to be nipped in the bud. Ibid, 225.

rule of “*pêle-mêle*.”<sup>414</sup> Without ceremony, the envoys would gather more freely and thereby embody the utopia of the round table: unfettered communication, arriving at a solution, liberated from the claims of rank and the political wrangling, which, in fact, had produced the table and its conference in the first place. (Fig. 15)

For some enlightenment thinkers, the *pêle-mêle* implied a kind of natural equality and an ideal of communication unhindered by objects and bodies. Like the ceremonial ground, the diplomatic table was, for a philosopher such as Rousseau, not only a farce but a material hinderance to thought; it was part of an outmoded regime in which formalities and regulations inhibited the flow of ideas. He wrote acerbically:

*Il se forme de temps en temps parmi nous des espèces de diètes generales sous le nom de congrès, ou l'on se rend solennellement de tous les États de l'Europe pour s'en retourner de même; ou l'on s'assemble pour ne rien dire; ou toutes les affaires publiques se traitent en particulier; où l'on délibère en common si la table sera ronde ou carrée, si la salle aura plus ou moins de portes, si un tel plénipotentiaire aura le visage ou le dos tourné vers la fenêtre, si tel autre fera deux pouces de chemin de plus ou de moins dans une visite, et sur mille questions de pareille importance, inutilement agitées depuis trois siècles, et très-dignes assurément d'occuper les politiques du nôtre.*<sup>415</sup>

While ceremonial and tables both offered a means of establishing a literal common ground (albeit a disputed one), Rousseau suggests that all of these issues of organizational grounding are secondary to human ideas; he argues that communication could and *should* proceed without them and that peace is possible without a material and performative machinery. Implicit in Rousseau's argument is an assumption, taken up by Habermas centuries later, of an ideal flow of idea exchange, one not hampered by material processes, or determined through a process of constructs of inclusion and exclusion – a notion, in fact, grounded upon of a Christian round table, as we have seen.

In spite of Rousseau's protests, however, tables are still with us. They seem to be part of a political “space of appearance” that indeed depends on objects to facilitate dialogue because they provide a tangible common ground – at least *if* both sides share a set of cultural assumptions about the nature of that ground and the objects that literally furnish it.<sup>416</sup> (Fig. 16) In 2007, when Gary Adams, head of Sinn Féin and the Northern Irish Unionist Ian Paisley miraculously met, they did so through the mediating presence of a special table. This table was diamond-shaped, a form that ensured that they could share a common ground, but neither had to sit across from or directly next to the other. In photographs, it even appeared as though they were sitting at a round

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<sup>414</sup> “*Toutes les conférences se tiendront sans cérémonie, en sorte que les plénipotentiaires s'assoieront du côté de leur entrée dans la salle. Où il n'y aura ni haut, ni bas bout, mais ils seront tous ensemble indistinctement et pêle-mêle.*” Cited in Bély, 413. Fig. 15 is taken from Jan van Vianen's portfolio of the Ryswick negotiations, but shows a room in which the table has disappeared, giving way simply to a circle of chairs. Van Vianen and Scherm's images of Ryswick, however, would later be recycled, as Stichter recycled Ter Borch and Suyderhof's images, in order to produce and market images of the Peace of Utrecht. See Rijksmuseum Inventory RP-P-OB-83.037, <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/search/objects?set=RP-P-OB-83.037#/RP-P-OB-83.037-49,44>.

<sup>415</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres Complètes* Tome 1 (Paris: Furne, 1839), 612.

<sup>416</sup> Note how in a print published on the occasion of the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699 the Ottoman delegation does not have a table in their private quarters, but in the common negotiating zone their sofa has been pulled up to the shared round table. Fig. 16

table although they had steadfastly avoided each other for years (and there was no handshake at the meeting). Reconciliation was brokered and made visible thanks to the table's shape, the Irish troubles bridged by a connector-barrier.<sup>417</sup>

Even more recently, when Boris Johnson met Emmanuel Macron in the Elysée Palace to discuss Brexit in August 2019, a scandal erupted: “tablegate”. Photographs of their meeting began to circulate like wild fire that showed Johnson putting his foot on the small round table separating the two men, who were seated across from one another. The image of this mis-use of the table seemed to speak volumes about the new British PM's attitude. (Fig. 17) A brash disrespect for diplomatic norms and distinct lack of interest in pursuing serious Brexit negotiations with the EU were confirmed in the court of public opinion by this breach of table etiquette. No wonder no-deal was forthcoming. How could Downing Street claim to want to make a deal when it walked all over the negotiating table? It turned out that the images were misleading: Macron himself had (ironically?) invited Johnson to use the table as a foot stool, suggesting that he lean back and relax.<sup>418</sup> The visual effect, however, of Johnson abusing collective assumptions about the table's proper use and function proved immediately damning, as if the passions banished beneath the seventeenth-century table had suddenly shed their shackles and taken the shape of boorish populism. How was one to find a common center in such a politically divided present?

That the image could scandalize indicates, perhaps, the enduring presence of Ter Borch's matrix in a collective imaginary. We have seen here how (and why) both his image of the table and the table as an image had such a powerful grounding effect on visualizations of peace as part of a collective endeavor. Ter Borch's common ground has proved to be fertile indeed. It also is a ground that ought to make us pause to think about the power of images and material objects like tables as part of political processes in ways that facilitate the production not only of fictions (“fake news”), but also new realities. Tables as grounds that *gather* people around them are not merely incidental accessories to human actors when it comes to mediating ideas about the nature of politics. They have, in fact, been carefully choreographed over centuries to hold bodies together in specific ways. Today, it seems increasingly difficult – as it also seemed during the Thirty Years War – to bring polarized political opponents together; the center as a meeting point appears to be losing its pull. How can a common ground be found if there is literally no longer stable base to stand upon; when the “ground” is displaced by an endless series of tablet windows, tabs, and echo chambers that purport to offer connection, but which simultaneously prioritize individuality enabled by disconnect? Is it even viable in today's world to mobilize the center as a gathering point? Or is the constant threat of collapse to the round table today a reminder of the processes of exclusion that went into the construction of the table, but which could long be overlooked (thanks table's deceptively simple form)? The unhooking of the table's metaphorical legs may be seen by some as a liberation from the tyranny of the table's top. For others it might serve as a reminder to attend to Arendt's warning that a world in which there is no common material basis to connect and separate us, is one in which there is nothing that prevents “our falling over each other.”<sup>419</sup> In either case, a world with no tables is one in which we may fail to recognize own capacity for enacting political change. *A table.*

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<sup>417</sup> Werber, 113-114.

<sup>418</sup> Oliver Georgi, “Fuß auf dem Tisch? Skandal!” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 23, 2019 accessed September 20, 2019. <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/boris-johnson-und-twitter-fuss-auf-dem-tisch-skandal-16347814.html>

<sup>419</sup> Arendt, 52.

## Transitional Space II: At the Table's Edge

In the last episode of “on the table”, we have seen how tables served the interests of conflict resolution in the west during the early modern era because of their capacity to manage differences. This was facilitated by their unique ability to act simultaneously as a connector and a divider. The table's success in this endeavor, however, hinged upon a shared set of cultural assumptions about tables. As we observed, tables aligned well with the discourse of European civility as it developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They offered a means by which the rational upper body and base lower body could separate physically and conceptually; above the table, where plates and silverware established personal boundaries, a kind of shared individualism could be performed. Each person at the table was separated, but connected through shared cultural assumptions and rules of etiquette and decorum. This “civil” discourse lent itself to translation in the arena of international diplomacy, where individual states could stake a claim for their legitimacy, which they negotiated politically at the diplomatic peace conference, staged around a table.

At Westphalia, where I suggested this tradition engraved itself most clearly upon the public imagination, one “European” power was conspicuously absent: the Ottomans.<sup>420</sup> I have put “European” in scare quotes because precisely the question of the Ottomans' relationship with Europe was, in the period and subsequently, open to debate: were the Ottomans part of the circle of European powers, or were they somehow separate? Whichever position one espouses, one thing is (and was to contemporaries) certain: the Ottoman state was a major power player in Europe and was deeply imbricated in the theater of European diplomacy and political alliances. Although the Ottomans were absent from Westphalia, Western diplomats were present throughout the seventeenth century in Constantinople, where all the major European states had permanent embassies. These embassies – whether in interacting with each other, or with the Ottomans – staged the performance of diplomacy through the same channels that were used in “Europe”: rituals of precedence and, frequently, gatherings around the table in moments of planned sociability. Even if the Ottomans were not present at peace negotiations taking place between the western powers, these negotiations reiterated themselves in the Ottoman capital, where European diplomats made use of opportunities to interact with the Sultan's court, and with each other, in order to stake claims for political precedence as well as to cement alliances.<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> See, for example, István Hiller, “Feind im Frieden: Die Rolle des Osmanischen Reiches in der europäischen Politik zur Zeit des Westfälischen Friedens,” in *Der Westfälische Friede. Diplomatie – politische Zäsur – kulturelles Umfeld – Rezeptionsgeschichte: Historische Zeitschrift. Beihefte* vol. 26 (1998), 393-404 and Maria Baramova, “Non-splendid Isolation: The Ottoman Empire and the Thirty Years' War” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Thirty Years' War* Olaf Asbach and Peter Schröder, eds. (London: Ashgate, 2014), 115-126; Arno Strohmeier, “Das Osmanische Reich- ein Teil des europäischen Staatensystems der Frühen Neuzeit?” in *Das Osmanische Reich und die Habsburgermonarchie: Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung Ergänzungsband 48*, Marlene Kurz, Martin Scheutz, Karl Vocelka, and Thomas Winkelbauer, eds. (Vienna & Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2005), 149-166.

<sup>421</sup> On Ottoman diplomacy and Europe in general, see for instance Suraiya Faroqui, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It* (London: IB Tauris, 2004); John Tolan, Gilles Veinstein, Henry Laurens, *Europe and the Islamic World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); J. C. Hurewitz, “Ottoman Diplomacy and the European State System” in *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Spring, 1961), 141-152; Guido Komatsu, “Die Türkei und das europäische Staatensystem im 16. Jahrhundert. Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis des frühneuzeitlichen Völkerrechts” in *Recht und Reich im Zeitalter der Reformation: Festschrift für Horst Rabe*, Christine Roll, ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lano, 1996), 121-144. Karl-Heinz Ziegler, “The peace treaties of the Ottoman Empire



The same was true for the Ottomans, although their tables were somewhat different from Western norms, as was the food they laid upon the table. In this “transitional space”, I propose that we examine several accounts of tables in the context of European and Ottoman diplomacy, looking at both moments of cultural difference, as well as elements of cultural similarity in the role of tables. What becomes clear in moments of cultural interchange around the table between Ottomans and Europeans in this era is that tables could serve as what Susan Star and James Griesemer have called “boundary objects”.<sup>422</sup> They did so in a couple of interrelated senses. Most obviously, as objects that literally connect and divide, tables *are* borders; they furnish an edge, which is zone of interaction, a border with (at least) two sides. This is the literal, physical manifestation of the table as a boundary object. What Star and Griesemer mean, however, by “boundary object” is a special kind of object that bridges more than one “social world” at once, but maintains the integrity of the multiple audiences that interact through the object.<sup>423</sup> The boundary object “satisfies” the “informational requirements” of various parties because they are “plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites.”<sup>424</sup> They have different meanings, depending on the social world in which they find themselves, but are recognizable enough to be common to more than one world and thereby furnish a boundary that, like a table, separates and connects.

Let us begin by considering an object that introduces us to notions of boundaries and tables specifically in the context of Ottoman-Habsburg political interaction in the seventeenth century. Today in the Bavarian National Museum in Munich, there resides an elaborately worked gaming table (*Prunkspieltisch*), which was fashioned in an unknown Augsburg workshop between 1683 and 1692.<sup>425</sup> (Fig. 18) The table is made of expensive woods like oak and ebony, and inlaid with elaborate patterns rendered in mother of pearl and tortoise shell. These ornamental elements take the form of rolling acanthus leaves, which undulate in the table’s center and around its perimeter. In the center, between the leafy tendrils, we find small figures of humans and monkeys playing games: cards, billiards, and at the table’s very center, an elegantly outfitted man and woman playing backgammon. The depiction mirrors the table upon which it appears, for if one were to remove the table’s uppermost surface, one would reveal several game boards: mill, backgammon, and chess. (Figs. 19-20) A surface that depicts play becomes one on

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with European Christian Powers” in *Peace Treaties and International Law in European History: From the Late Middle Ages to World War One*, Randall Lesaffer, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 338-364; A.C.S. Peacock, *The Ottoman Empire and its Frontiers*, in *The Frontiers of the Ottoman World*, A.C.S. Peacock ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1-30; Colin Heywood, “The Frontier in Ottoman History: Old Ideas and New Myths” in *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700-1700*, Daniel Power and Naomi Standen, eds. (New York: St. Martin’s, 1999), 228-250; for an analytic overview over the extensive historiography on early modern Habsburg-Ottoman relations, see especially Robyn Dora Radway, *Vernacular Diplomacy in Central Europe: Statesmen and Soldiers between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, 1543-1593* (PhD diss. Princeton University, 2017).

<sup>422</sup> Susan Leigh Star and James R. Griesemer, “Institutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley’s Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39 in *Social Studies of Science*, Volume 19, Issue 3 (Aug., 1989), 387-420. STOR

<sup>423</sup> Ibid, 399-389.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid, 393.

<sup>425</sup> On furniture design and ornamentation in Munich under Max-Emanuel, see Max Tillman, *Ein Frankreichbündnis der Kunst: Kurfürst Max Emanuel von Bayern als Auftraggeber und Sammler* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2009); see also *Prunkmöbel am Münchener Hof: Barocker Dekor unter der Lupe*, Renate Eikermann, ed. (Munich: Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, 2011), *Die Möbel der Residenz München*, Gerhard Hojer, ed. (Munich & New York: Prestel, 1996).

which one can play. Around the table's perimeter, the ornamentation is more fractured. Here we find roundels with portraits of individual men interspersed with trophies (or war) and putti playing with figures either of dismembered "Turks", or "Turks" in chains.<sup>426</sup>

The context of the table explains the choices in motifs. It was most likely a diplomatic gift from Kaiser Leopold I of Austria to his son-in-law, Kurfürst Max Emanuel, the Wittelsbach Elector of Bavaria, who had played a formidable role in the Habsburg victory over the Ottomans during the Turkish Wars of the 1680s.<sup>427</sup> The woman and man at the design's center can be understood as a happy couple, enjoying the bounty that surrounds them while leisurely playing civilized strategic games at a table (the plethora of intertwined acanthus leaves appears to spring from an urn placed on their gaming table). The men in the roundels at the table's edge, meanwhile, read as a who-is-who of European players in the Turkish war, including Leopold and the Kurfürst. These figures are linked together by the chains that bind the Turks, implying on one hand that the Turkish wars cemented the alliance of a Christian community of common geopolitical interest and, on the other hand, that this community was also linked by a shared set of cultural practices (like warring, gaming, and peacemaking) that took place at tables. (Fig. 21) Indeed, the portraits in the roundels are derived from contemporary prints of the 1683 Habsburg victory at Kahlenberg over the Sultan's armies only whereas propaganda prints of the battle featured Kara Mustafa (the Ottoman general in charge), the Ottoman presence at the table has been de-centered and moved to the table's edge.<sup>428</sup> The roundel images also resemble the printed portraits of diplomats we examined in the context of Ter Borch's work at Westphalia. Here, at the table's edge, the "Turks" that appear have been relegated to a supporting role, like the legs of another Munich game table in which a group of "Turks" in chains support the gaming table's raised top. (Fig 22) They embody a limit, residing at the object's edge although they have not been banished altogether from the table: that edge is what holds the table's players (the figures in the roundels) together.<sup>429</sup> In the second Munich game table, the "Turkish" figures literally form the actual base of the table; they are under the top, appearing quite fully in a "supporting" role.

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<sup>426</sup> I have, again, used scare quotes in order to indicate that these depictions of what contemporary Habsburg commentators may have called "Türken" was in no way aligned with the multicultural and multid denominational polity of the Ottomans.

<sup>427</sup> For a general overview of the context of the Turkish Wars (*Türkenkriege*) in the seventeenth century, see Karl Těply, "Das österreichische Türkenkriegszeit" in *Die Türkenkriege in der historischen Forschung*, Zygmunt Abrahamowicz, ed. (Wien: Deuticke, 1983), 5-25. On Habsburg/Wittelsbach relations see, Ferdinand Kramer, "Mehr als Nachbarn: mit den 'Privilegium Minus' begann 1156 die getrennte Geschichte Bayerns und Österreichs. Erst 600 Jahre später wurde ihre 'Wiedervereinigung' wieder eine politische Option" in *Damals* vol. 44,4 (2012), 44-46.

<sup>428</sup> On the table's motifs, see the object file at the BNM Munich see: <https://www.bayerisches-nationalmuseum.de/index.php?id=547&laufnr=00201183>. On Max Emanuel's involvement in the Turkish Wars and Habsburg politics see Ludwig Hüttl, *Max Emanuel. Der Blaue Kurfürst, 1679–1726. Eine politische Biographie* (Munich: Süddeutscher Verlag, 1976).

<sup>429</sup> The top of this gaming table was made for Max Emanuel's father Ferdinand Maria and incorporates motifs traditionally associated with the hunt: specifically, the hunter as hunted. Following the Turkish Wars, Max Emanuel seems to have commissioned the base in order to adapt the tabletop to his own self-aggrandizing purposes; the chained Turks thus now support the table's top, highlighting the marginalization of the Turks through their expulsion to the "base" instead of joining in the political process located on top of the table. See Cordula Mauß, "Prunkmöbel aus Bayerns Schlössern: Ein Spieltisch aus dem 17. Jahrhundert", *Schloesser Blog Bayern*, May 7, 2018.

<https://schloesserblog.bayern.de/lieblingsstuecke-unsere- Autoren/prunkmoebel-aus-bayerns-schloessern>. The blog incorrectly identifies the base as being commissioned by Max Emanuel in 1790; by then the "Blue Kurfürst" was

This deployment of images of Ottoman subjugation belies, however, the fact that throughout the seventeenth century, Habsburg-Ottoman relations had actually been growing closer. Throughout the sixteenth century, but especially beginning with the Treaty of Zsitvatorok in 1606, the Ottomans and the Habsburgs had been increasingly sitting down at the treaty table together.<sup>430</sup> This was not an easily arranged feat: it demanded all kinds of diplomatic “adjustments” that allowed the Austrians to see themselves on equal footing with the Sultan and, simultaneously, allowed the Ottomans to imagine that they occupied a position above the Kaiser. Sometimes these “adjustments” were achieved by linguistic manipulations, e.g. since treaties were first signed in different languages and only subsequently translated, there was some room to formulate certain aspects in relatively ambiguous terms that let both sides imagine they had made few compromises.<sup>431</sup>

Staging was equally important, just as it was at Münster and Ryswijk. Ottoman-Habsburg diplomatic interactions involved numerous rituals in which stage-like settings were erected (as at the Field of the Cloth of Gold), in which ambassadors for the two sides approached one another and met in the middle of a field where three columns had been erected. Dismounting from their horses, they proceeded toward one another and met in the middle. (Fig. 23) Of course, things didn’t always go as planned and ambassadors employed various gambits to try to gain a symbolic advantage.<sup>432</sup> At the peace talks of Karlowitz in 1699, a building was erected in for the conference that resembled the lay-out of the Huis ter Nieuwburg in order to orchestrate a performance of neutrality: a central chamber was surrounded on three sides by side rooms, where the individual delegations could enter and exit through private doors.<sup>433</sup> (Fig. 24) They could also all proceed into the central room simultaneously, thereby circumventing the issue of precedence. In the Ottoman delegation’s private room, we see in a print made to celebrate the occasion how the Ottoman diplomatic team sits on a set of upholstered low benches lining the edges of the room. In the central chamber, the print shows how the Turkish delegation has been brought to the round table by means of a raising one of these benches, which allows them to sit as they do in

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long dead. See Edgar Bierende, “Kat.-Nr. 20, Prunkspieltisch mit gefesselten Türken,” in *Pracht und Zeremoniell. Die Möbel der Residenz München*, Brigitte Langer ed. (Munich: Hirmer, 2002), 172.

<sup>430</sup> See e.g. Dennis Dierks, “Friedensbild und Herrscherbild in osmanisch-habsburgischen Friedensverträgen des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts” in *Frieden und Konfliktmanagement in interkulturellen Räumen: das Osmanische Reich und die Habsburger*, Arno Strohmeyer and Norbert Spannenberger, eds. (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2013), 311-332, and Arno Strohmeyer, “Die habsburgisch-osmanische Freundschaft (16.-18. Jahrhundert)” in *ibid.*, 223-238. See also Rudolf Neck “Andrea Negroni: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der österreichisch-türkischen Beziehungen nach dem Frieden von Zsitvatorok” in *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs* 3. Band (Leo Santifaller-Festschrift) (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Staatsdruckerei, 1950), 166-195.

<sup>431</sup> See Ernst D. Petritsch, “Dissimulieren in den habsburgisch-osmanischen Friedens- und Waffenstillstandsverträgen (16. – 17- Jahrhundert): Differenzen und Divergenzen,” in *Frieden und Konfliktmanagement in interkulturellen Räumen: das Osmanische Reich und die Habsburger*, Arno Strohmeyer and Norbert Spannenberger, eds. (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2013), 145-162; Gustav Bayerle, “The compromise at Zsitvatorok,” *Archivum Ottomanicum* 6 (1980), 5-55; Markus Köhbach, “Çaesar oder imperator? Zur Titulatur der römischen Kaiser durch die Osmanen nach dem Vertrag von Zsitvatorok,” *WZKM* 82 (1992), 223-234.

<sup>432</sup> See Thomas Rahn, “Grenzsituation des Zeremoniells in der frühen Neuzeit” in *Die Grenze: Begriff und Inszenierung*, eds. Makus Bauer and Thomas Rahn (Berlin: Akademieverlag, 1997), 177-206; Niggle

<sup>433</sup> On the Peace of Karlowitz see, eg. Mónika F. Molnár, “Der Friede von Karlowitz und das Osmanische Reich in *Frieden und Konfliktmanagement in interkulturellen Räumen: das Osmanische Reich und die Habsburger*, Arno Strohmeyer and Norbert Spannenberger, eds. (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2013), 197- 222; Rifa’at Ali Abou-El-Haj, “Ottoman Attitudes Toward Peace Making: the Karlowitz Case,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur des Islamischen Orients* 51 (1974), 131-137 and Rifa’at Ali Abou-El-Haj “Ottoman Diplomacy at Karlowitz” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 87, No. 4 (Oct-Dec. 1967), 498-512.

their private room (with crossed legs as if on the ground), whereas the westerners all sit on separate raised chairs, feet on the floor.<sup>434</sup> In this manner, the table bridges cultural expectations and norms, so that it can serve rival, but also common interests: both sides want peace, though both want it to their own advantage, on their own terms.

The difference in European and Ottoman tables' heights was a frequently mentioned aspect of cultural difference in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Habsburg travel reports from voyages to Constantinople. This is true both for unofficial, as well as official diplomatic accounts. Samuel Kiechel was a merchant from Ulm who travelled in an unofficial capacity to the Middle East in 1585-1589 and then recorded his journey. Upon arriving in Tripoli, he describes how “*Thürcken, Mohren*” or “*Arabier*” come together in public to eat and cook, in public “*Garküchen*” (kitchens).<sup>435</sup> When they eat, just as when they work, hang around (*kurzweilen*), or write, they do it on the ground, he notes, with evident curiosity. They squat or sit with bent knees next to one another, often upon a seat raised by the height of a shoe from the earth. It can happen, he notes, that the spot where they eat, lie, and sleep is one and the same.<sup>436</sup> Ogier de Busbecq also commented on this multifunctionality of low flat surfaces in his travel diaries, describing public inns (*caravanseraï*) as featuring a low wall that “is flat and about four feet broad, and serves the Turk for bed and dining-table”; “this kind of inn inspired me with a particular disgust; for the Turks kept their gaze fixed upon us in astonishment at our [different] habits and customs,” he notes further.<sup>437</sup> (Fig. 25) Kiechel and Busbecq’s relatively neutral anthropological observations were voiced by other commentators in much more explicitly negative terms. Hans Dernschwam was a Bohemian from Brüx (today the Czech town of Most), who worked for the Fuggers for a while, as well as for Italian business men and who journeyed in 1553-1555 to Constantinople on his own costs as part of Ferdinand I’s delegation to Sultan Süleyman’s court.<sup>438</sup> Dernschwam’s observations are particularly interesting for food historians, since he consistently comments upon food culture, including prices. For our present concerns, however, what is notable is the way in which he often frames Turkish eating habits in terms of beastliness, writing, for instance, “*salat fressen sy, wie ander viech, ungesalczen und ungeschmalczen ane essigk, uns anders mer dergleichen. Wogen nit souil unkost darauff, fressen auch die ostreas ader schnecken also roch*”.<sup>439</sup> The emphasis in sentences like these lies on

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<sup>434</sup> The room where the Ottoman delegation meets – in the print – is set up like an Ottoman “sofa” or hall in a living space with cushioned seats lining the walls. The propped up section of sofa at the table in fact resembles what came to be known in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century as a “sofa” in the west: a piece of the larger seating ensemble raised somewhat higher above the ground than it would be in an Ottoman home. The French adopted the word “sofa” to indicate this type of furniture (intended for repose) which the English word “couch” derives also from the French word to sleep: *coucher*. See Gülen Çevik, “American Style or Turkish Chair: The Triumph of Bodily Comfort” in *Journal of Design History* Vol. 23, No. 4 (2010), 367-385. As Çevik notes, the French author de Caillères defined it in *Mots à la Mode* (1692) as ‘a kind of couch in the Turkish style’ (*une espèce de lit de repos à la manière de Turcs*)...” Çevik, 369.

<sup>435</sup> Samuel Kiechel, *Die Reisen des Samuel Kiechel, 1585-89*, trans. Hartmut Prottung (Ulm: Alabanda Verlag, 1987), 288.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>437</sup> Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Imperial Ambassador at Constantinople 1554-1562*, trans. Edward Seymour Forster (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 17.

<sup>438</sup> See Hans Dernschwam’s *Tagebuch: einer Reise nach Konstantinopel und Kleinasien (1553-55), nach der Urschrift im Fugger-Archiv*, Franz Babinger, ed. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1986), XIII-XXXVI for Dernschwam’s biography.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, 37. On food and travel reports in Turkey during the early modern period in general, see Eric Dursteler, “Bad Bread and the “Outrageous Drunkenness of the Turks”: Food and Identity in the Accounts of Early Modern European Travelers to the Ottoman Empire” in *Journal of World History*, Vol. 25, No. 2/3 (June/September 2014), 203-228.

drawing a close relationship between Ottoman table-culture and the ground; raw food – including vegetables that spring close to the ground like salad as well as critters like snails that crawl on the earth, eaten raw like animals (“fressen”). Dernschwam draws on a similar associative vocabulary when describing Moslem prayer, “*Auff dem pflaster ligen auff ir turkische art lange dagkhen, arauff sy noch der ordnung ir machometisch gebeth sprechen, it vjll buckhen, iderfallen, knyhen, kussen. Under inen seindd vornen ir hoschia ader pfaffen, die inen fwr bethen und ir ceremonien treyben. Also thun die andern alle nerach wie die gense die kopffe auff die erden legen und die arsche in die hoche reckhen, wie tauch enten auff den theichen*”.<sup>440</sup> Moslems are so low to the ground, as he describes, that their asses stick up into the air (unbecomingly) like geese diving for food in water.

Clearly Dernschwam’s 16<sup>th</sup>-century cultural palette manifests elements of sixteenth-century etiquette (and humanist) discourse that we saw at play in our discussion of tables and manners in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the *Enchiridion*, for instance, Erasmus describes man as a “marvelous creature composed of two or three very diverse parts, a soul which is like a divinity and a body which is like a brute beast... Since the body is itself visible, it takes pleasure in things visible. Since it is mortal, it pursues temporal things; since it is heavy, it sinks downward.”<sup>441</sup> The Turkish cultural predilection for low-lying tables and seating arrangements conflates easily in Dernschwam’s account with the philosophical positioning of man’s bestial nature in relation to a bodily orientation toward the ground, as detailed by Erasmus and others. If the soul and upward movement is righteous, the Turkish custom of sitting, sleeping, “hanging around,” and eating on the ground is obviously animalistic and, thus, a clear sign of the Ottoman’s base nature.<sup>442</sup> Such interactions could be a cause of amusement, as well as criticism. In Friedrich Seidel’s travel report from 1591 (published in 1721), the author describes a moment of what historian Robyn D. Radway has called “vernacular diplomacy” between Ottomans and Habsburgs.<sup>443</sup> Seidel describes how a meal has been laid out on the carpeted floor, which the Austrians had trouble adjusting to, corporeally:

*Darauf hat man uns sämtlich Adel und Unadel / Kutscher und Koch zc. ermahnet, den Imbiß anzugreifen. Weil aber weder Tisch noch Stühle und Bäncke da gewesen / haben wir uns in die Seffion nicht zu schicken gewust/ weil wir auf Türckische Art nicht sitzen können, sondern sich ein jedweder nach Gutdüncken gelägert/ da mancher gekauert/ mancher auff der Seiten/ mancher auf dem Bauch gelegen, welches denen Türcken ein Gelächter verursacht / daß wir so ungeschickt und die Knie oder Schenckel nicht biegen können doch haben sie uns allezeit zum Essen vermahnet/ sind auch etliche mit Scerbet und Tranck herum gegangen, die grosse Bocks-Häute als Sack, Pfeiffen am*

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<sup>440</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>441</sup> Erasmus, “Enchiridion” in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, ed. John W. O’Malley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 41.

<sup>442</sup> On the limits of Erasmian humanism in an intercultural context, food, and bestiality in Ottoman-western relations as represented in period literature, see Timothy Hampton, “‘Turkish Dogs’: Rabelais, Erasmus, and the Rhetoric of Alterity” in *Representations*, No. 41 (Winter, 1993), 58-82. On the ideological and physical cultivation of “uprightness” in early modern Europe, see George Vigarello, “The Upward Training of the Body from the Age of Chivalry to Courtly Civility”, in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body, Part Two*, Michel Feher, Ramona Naddaff and NadiaTazi, eds. (New York: Zone, 1989), 149-199.

<sup>443</sup> See Radway, op cit.

*Halse tragende mit Silber und übergüldt beschlagen / in güldne Schälgen eingefchenckt.*<sup>444</sup>

The Austrians, Seidel notes, found the Turkish food unappealing (disgusting, in fact) and the Turks found the Habsburg inability to find a seating position on the ground amusing, laughing at how they fell over on their sides and stomachs.

Whether negative or curious, Turkish posture and table customs were taken note of by these and other Habsburg travelers. In Solomon Schweigger's report of 1608, he observes that the embassy was invited to a banquet, where they sat on the ground (on carpets) "*auf die türkische Art, die Beine übereinander geschränkt niederlassen mussten, was manchem gar sauer ankam, dieweil wir es nicht gewohnt*".<sup>445</sup> Describing the Sultan's meal practices, he notes that he also sits on a Turkish carpet, in front of him a small, round table (*Tischlein*) that is one "*spannen*" high (ca. 20 cm).<sup>446</sup> The little table is actually not really a table at all, but a stand, on top of which rests a piece of hard leather that has been stretched with a drawstring over a frame so that it is taut; this corresponds to what in Turkish is called a "*sofra*", which can be both a tray or a table prepared for a meal.<sup>447</sup> (Fig. 25) When Simpertus Niggl visits the Grand Mufti<sup>448</sup> with the Count Wolfgang zu Oettingen-Wallerstein in 1700 on the latter's official diplomatic mission down the Danube to Constantinople to seal the agreement made at Karlowitz, he reports that the Grand Ambassador encountered him on a "cushion in the corner of his room. His Excellency sat directly opposite him on a low chair, and addressed the Mufti in German."<sup>449</sup> Meeting local officials meant adapting to new cultural posture, but did not necessarily mean leaving one's cultural comfort zone altogether: sitting at the low table, in this case, was par for the course, but conversation could still be held in the Count's native tongue.<sup>450</sup>

Table ritual, in fact, played a defining role in Oettingen's trip. He left Vienna with a fleet of river boats, one of which was the "meal" boat (*Tafel-Schiff*).<sup>451</sup> The travel report is governed by a daily ritual of dining and attending mass, often in conjunction. The rhythm of the table is

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<sup>444</sup> Simpert Niggl, *Reisebeschreibung von Wien nach Konstantinopel*, Inga Pohlmann ed. (Eggingen: Edition Isele, 2005), 4.

<sup>445</sup> Solomon Schweigger, *Ein neue Reyßbeschreibung auß Teutschland Nach Constantinopel und Jerusalem* (Nuremberg: Lantzenberger, 1608), 59.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid 147; "*spanne*" defined in Niggl, 205, note 623.

<sup>447</sup> See *Metin Saip Sürücüoğlu, "Kitchen Organization, Ceremonial and Celebratory Meals in the Ottoman Empire,"* <http://www.turkish-cuisine.org/food-and-social-life-2/ceremonial-and-celebratory-meals-21.html>, last accessed 9.11.2020.

<sup>448</sup> A Mufti is a teacher of the Holy Law, whose task is to answer either legal or ethical questions and make "suggestions" (*fethwas*). Mufti (*Şeyhülislam*) title was an honorific for Islamic scholars used in the classical age, which in the Ottoman empire in the early modern period came to be identified with the Grand Mufti, whose decisions could even override opinions of the Sultan. On the ninth of February, the Mufti described by Niggl was murdered by revolting Janissaries. Niggl, note 561, 202.

<sup>449</sup> Niggl, 89.

<sup>450</sup> On Oettingen-Wallerstein and his voyage see the short summary in Volker v. Volckamer, "Graf Wolfgang IV. zu Oettingen-Wallerstein (1629-1708)" in *Diplomaten und Wesire: Krieg und Frieden im Spiegel türkischen Kunsthandwers*, Peter W. Schienerl, ed. (Munich: Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, 1988), 9-35.

<sup>451</sup> The list of boats in the entourage includes the *Mund-Kuchel-Schiff*, the *Tafel-Schiff*, "the other" *Kuchel-Schiff*, "the baker ship, the dessert ship ("Zuckerbacher"), butchers ship, the cook's ship, washing ship, and the milling ship, to name just a few of the barks related directly to table events. Niggl also includes the seating order, starting of course with his Excellency the Grand Ambassadors table, where all the Caveliers, "Herr Praelat" and the two legations secretaries as well as Herr Hoff-Marshall sat. Seventeen further tables are listed, including those of the cooks, musicians, barbers, and others. Niggl, 19-20.

intimately integrated into the rhythm of the journey. Hence, even when in less than ideal circumstances, Niggel is sure to report on moments during which the Embassy affirmed their communal connection through eating: “The table, was held as usual, [this time] in a horse stall.”<sup>452</sup> The Habsburg ambassador then throws various parties at his residence in the Sultan’s capital, which Niggel reports on dutifully, always mentioning that a feast is served as an occasion for meeting. On the name-day of the Emperor, everyone “dressed in their best... The English ambassador was invited to the party, and to the table/feast (*Tafel*), at which there was not only rare music, but also a toast to the Holy Roman Emperor’s health with drum roll and trumpets...”<sup>453</sup> On the Holy Roman Emperor’s birthday (and the feast of St. Anne), the Polish and the Dutch ambassadors are invited. Such reports multiply themselves throughout the text and reflect how table ceremonies between Europeans in Constantinople served as a means of cultivating western diplomatic ties, while also trying to assert precedence, or dominance in the European community settled there. This happened in part through performative acts at the Sultan’s court, as when the new French ambassador famously – and scandalously – refused to discard his sword before entering Topkapı also in 1700, the same year as Oettingen-Wallerstein’s voyage.<sup>454</sup> Charles de Ferriol’s insolent gesture was not actually directed at the Sultan, but rather at his fellow Europeans, like Oettingen-Wallerstein, who the French envoy hoped to intimidate with his show of French insouciance. The performance was designed as message for the arriving Habsburg delegation, who were supposed to be impressed by how Louis XIV, the Sun King (represented in proxy by Ferriol), was not intimidated by the Sultan and would not capitulate to any imposed regulations. This group of visiting embassy delegations circulating around the Ottoman capital were, thus, in dialogue both with each other and the Sultan’s court, with whom they also interacted with at tables.

These tables were, in keeping with what I have described so far, generally banqueting tables, not diplomatic ones in the sense of a peace conference table set-up. When an ambassador came to Topkapı for an audience, he was greeted by a ceremonial ritual intended to impress. The ritual involved passing first into the palace through the courtyard, where a military performance spoke to the Sultan’s martial power.<sup>455</sup> Next, the ambassador proceeded to an audience with the Grand Vizier in the divan (Council hall, or *Divan-ı Hümayun*). The court chronicler Abdülkadir Efendi gave a report on the Persian embassy of 1619, when the ambassador Burun Kasim Khan arrived with 200 bales of silk and four elephants as presents. Abdülkadir waxes, “such an exalted divan was set up that neither King Alexander (the Great) nor Afrasiab, or Djam and Djamshid

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<sup>452</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid, 85.

<sup>454</sup> See Christine Weber, “Der Marquis, das Sofa und der Großwesir. Zu Funktion und Medialität interkultureller diplomatischer Zeremonien in der Frühen Neuzeit” in *Die Audienz: Ritualisierter Kulturkontakt in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2014), 221-246.

<sup>455</sup> On the ritual reception of diplomats in Constantinople see e.g. Ernst D. Petritch, “Zeremoniell bei Empfängen Habsburgischer Gesandtschaften in Konstantinopel” in *Diplomatisches Zeremoniell in Europa und im Mittleren in Osten in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Ralph Kauz, ed. (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaft, 2009), 301-322; Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, ceremonial, and power: the Topkapı Palace in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries* (New York: Architectural History Foundation, 1991), Michael Talbot, *British-Ottoman Relations, 1661-1807: Commerce and Diplomatic Practice in Eighteenth-Century Istanbul* (London: Boydell and Brewer (2017), Hedda Reindl-Kiel, “Audiences, banquets, garments and kisses. Encounters with the Ottoman Sultan in the 17th century” in *The Ceremonial of Audience: Transcultural Approaches*, Eva Orthmann and Anna Kollatz, eds. (Bonn: Bonn University Press, 2019), 169-208, Stefan Hanß, “Udienza und Divan-i Hümayun. Venezianisch-osmanische Audienzen des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts” in *Die Audienz: Ritualisierter Kulturkontakt in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2014)

had seen such magnificence. When the Persian envoy saw this glorious divan, his marrow almost turned into water and his liver into roast.<sup>456</sup> The food metaphor would have been apt, since after the great divan audience, the ambassador would have proceeded to a grand feast presided over by the Sultan.

Before addressing the feast, however, let us stay a moment in the divan. The *Nusretname* of Silahdar Fındıklı Mehmed describes the divan when a different Persian envoy arrived in 1696, “The low couches (*sedir*) were covered with a padding (*mak’ad*) and cushions of *zerbaft* set with jewels such as pearls, diamonds and rubies...In the dome hung a diamond latticework in the form of a flower and beneath thin chains of golden beads ending in huge pearls...Opposite the water fountain, three daises (that) were set up and in front of the middle one, a golden throne was installed, set with diamonds, rubies, garnets, and chrysolites...and over the throne 40 to 50 diamonds, rubies and garnets (all) the size of a walnut were hanging on chains next to each other.”<sup>457</sup> These displays were obviously intended to overwhelm the visiting diplomat with unadulterated splendor; they staged the position of the sultan as a monarch above all others. The seating arrangements were intended to consolidate this notion; the Sultan’s throne (or the throne of the Grand Vizir who was actually present on such occasions in the divan while the Sultan withdrew from sight) towered over all others in richness and it also positioned the Ottoman authority literally on top of the ambassador. For by the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the sultan or Grand Vizier no longer sat on a low seat when receiving embassies. Süleyman the magnificent had still sat in the traditional mode, but in the seventeenth century, it was common for the Sultan/Vizier to meet European visitors not seated “*alla turcha*” as one Venetian embassy exclaimed, but rather “*alla Cristiana*” on a raised throne, while the rest of the divan sat on the low, upholstered couches along the room’s perimeter.<sup>458</sup> This was a cultural adjustment, which indicates an attempt to make use of European postures in order to assert Ottoman power. Ottoman reception etiquette (*kanun üzere*) in fact differentiated between Christian and Muslim audiences. It dictated that if the envoy came from a Muslim kingdom, he would join the other members of the divan on padded benches, taking a seat on the low sofa by the *nis anci pasha* after kissing the hem of the Grand Vizier’s kaftan.<sup>459</sup> When European envoys came, however, the Grand Vizier disappeared into a toilet adjoining the Council Hall right before the western envoy entered the space. He then reappeared, and took his raised seat, while all the other members of course stood. The European envoy then kissed the Grand Vizier’s hem and assumed a seat, *not* on the padded bench with the rest of the divan, but instead on a lonely, low stool near the entrance.

The toilet gambit was intended to prevent the Grand Vizier having to rise to meet a Christian diplomat and also indicated Ottoman disgust with the dirty unbeliever; it was a symbolic act, reinforced by the isolated, low positioning of the European envoy under the purview of the Grand Vizier on his raised dais. Humiliation was the name of the game, but the symbolic register was not directed only at the Christian envoy. It addressed itself perhaps even more to the Sultan’s court, who would have been much better equipped to understand the symbolic language deployed, particularly in reference to the characterization of the west as filthy. The host was playing to two different audiences at the same time.

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<sup>456</sup> Cited in Reidl-Kiel (2019), 173.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid.

<sup>458</sup> Cited in Stefan Hanß, “Udienna und Divan-i Hümayun. Venezianisch-osmanische Audienzen Des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts” in *Die Audienz: Ritualisierter Kulturkontakt in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2014), 208.

<sup>459</sup> Cited in Reidl-Kiel (2019), 173.



The same was true for what occurred subsequently at the ritual meal. After attending the divan's debate, the visiting delegation was invited to a feast also held in the Council Hall. Tasters from the royal household quickly swept into the hall, brandishing silver trays (*sofras*) to be placed around the hall; these contained serving plates in porcelain and celadon, and an amount of food as overwhelming as the material splendor of the divan's decoration. While the military parade outside the in the palace courtyard displayed the Ottomans' military power, and the jewels and furs of the divan display flaunted Ottoman wealth, the feast was a demonstration of Ottoman wherewithal when it came to providing for their vast empire.<sup>460</sup> When the Polish envoy came in the wake of Karlowitz, he was served 17 courses, a standard for foreign diplomats.<sup>461</sup> The Grand Ambassador of the Poles had not arrived by that point; but when he arrived a bit later, he was served 27 courses in the imperial divan because he was deemed to be ten courses more important. And when Oettingen-Wallerstein was hosted there, 29 courses were brought forth at one feast and 32 at another. On these occasions, Oettingen-Wallerstein would have shared the Grand Vizier's *sofra*, while the other members of his delegation would have been scattered around with dignitaries of the Ottoman court.

The format of Ottoman feasting was not actually especially different from western courtly dining: there were a great many different dishes served at the same time, both sweet and savory mixed together – obviously in the case of the impressive Topkapı banquets a *great* many dishes. What western guests often remarked upon in their written reports, however, were three key differences. To begin with, the laying of the table. It was not only that tables were low, but that they lacked proper “dressing.” In the 1580s, the Venetian ambassador Jacopo Soranzo complained that the tables lacked cloths and were instead covered with carpets; napkins, as his compatriot Ottaviano Bon wrote, were to be laid on the knee.<sup>462</sup> Moreover, there were no western eating utensils. Niggel's first account of a banquet shared by Oettingen-Wallerstein's delegation with representatives of the Sultan (while the embassy was en-route in today's Bulgaria), exclaimed, “*Es ware curios anzusehen / wie wir ohne Fazilet / Deller / Messer und Gabel / tranchirten / und die Speisen genossen*”<sup>463</sup>; spoons were the only eating utensil provided, made of wood or horn. These supplemented the right hand in consuming the multiple dishes, and were to be used to eat from communal (soup) bowls. Both the sharing of bowls and the lack of knives and forks were clear violations of western etiquette, and hence served in diplomatic reports and travel diaries printed and circulated in the west to shore up an image of western superiority and Turkish barbarity, much like Derschwan's accounts of Turkish cultural proximity to the ground.

Similarly, most western diplomats complained about the speed of the banquet. Paul Rycaut observed in 1665 that “The dishes are served in by one at a time, which as soon as touched or tasted are taken off to make room for another.”<sup>464</sup> Rycaut's boss, Heneage Finch 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Winchelsea, commented further, “we had no knives laid for us to cut, for supposing the

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<sup>460</sup> In fact, the passage through the first part of the palace was marked by the feeding of the troops, Winchelsea estimates ca. 5,000 soldiers at his entry in 1661. Talbot, 115.

<sup>461</sup> Reindl-Kiel (2019), 181-185.

<sup>462</sup> Bon, cited in Hanß, 182

<sup>463</sup> Niggel, 64.

<sup>464</sup> Paul Rycaut, *The history of the present state of the Ottoman Empire* (London: Charles Brome, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. 1686), 157. Rycaut writes further, “... a plentiful dinner is prepared for the Ambassadors, who together with the first Visier, and other Visiers of the Bench, and Tefterdar or Lord Treasurer, are seated at the same Table, which is not raised as high as the Tables we use, but something lower, covered over with a capacious Voyder of Silver, in which the Dishes are set, without ceremony of Table-cloth or Knives.”

sharpness of our stomachs would make amends for the want of knives.”<sup>465</sup> For the Ottomans, of course, what mattered was the quantity and variety of the food. The presentation aimed to overwhelm, hence the speed and diversity of dishes, which included various soups, roasts, chicken and other poultry, pastries, rice dishes, and sweets, rounded off by compotes and sherbet (served in gilt-rimmed glasses), which as described by Niggl was “a drink made with honey and sugar, after which a small spoon of rose-or-honey sugar was put in the mouth.”<sup>466</sup> Since the imperial kitchens with their prominently visible chimneys were located directly across the court from the divan, the variety and quantity of food stuffs were a reminder to the guests of the power of the palace’s interior machinery and the greatness of the palace’s facilities, which could nourish so many people so many different types of food.

The taste of the food was another issue of contention. The Venetians Bon and Soranzo complained that the food at Topkapı was inferior to “our delicacies from Italy” and consisted simply of “bread, rice, lamb, and water.”<sup>467</sup> But as Hedda Reindl-Kiel has observed, the Ottoman court took great care when it came to decisions about which type of food was served to different delegations. The variety of foods, their expense, and their symbolic meanings were carefully weighed in order to indicate the importance that the Sultan’s court allotted to visitors. For example, it appears as though the Ottomans laid a particular emphasis on both pleasing and impressing the Oettingen delegation of 1700. Thus at his first meal (with its 29 courses), the Habsburg embassy received a full range of meats. These included a lamb dish named *tokli* which was aged for between a half and a whole year, and which no other delegations were served.<sup>468</sup> And at his final meal, which included no *tokli* but more desserts, he was also served a ragout of ‘white chicken’ and sheep’s trotters (*paça-ı ganem*).

Reindl-Keil observes that today, sheep’s trotters (hooves) seem, to say the least, pedestrian. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, however, they were considered a delicacy and consumed after weddings.<sup>469</sup> Poultry’s value was even greater at the Ottoman court. Chicken had been popular since the Abbasid days, and could be said to be a staple of old Islamic traditional palace cuisine. It maintained its popularity throughout the early modern era at the Ottoman court, where it was consumed alongside partridge, wild duck, grouse, and even peacock (on occasion).<sup>470</sup> In the west, poultry was also extremely popular, so in serving chicken the Ottomans played to tastes on both sides of the table. Yet for the Ottoman court, birds had a quite specific meaning. In the Quran, as Reindl-Kiel has pointed out, birds are associated with paradise. In Quran LVI, it is written that believers will be rewarded in paradise with “fruit of their own choice, (21) And bird’s flesh, of what they desire;... (23) A recompense for what they have been doing.”<sup>471</sup> As “God’s shadow on earth”, the Sultan was providing his court with a taste of what they could anticipate in paradise when he served them chicken and other fowl. The Topkapı kitchens – so visible across the court from the *Divān-ı Hümāyūn* provided a taste of heaven, though only to

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<sup>465</sup> Cited in Talbot, 26.

<sup>466</sup> “*Das Confect bestunde in eingemachten Früchten / aber alles von Hönig. Das Getranck ware Scherbet ( dis ist ein von Hönig und Zucker gemachtes Wasser ) nach welchem sie einem ein Löfflein voll Rosen- oder Hönig-Zucker in den Mund gaben.*” Niggle, 64.

<sup>467</sup> Cited in Hanß, 190.

<sup>468</sup> Reindl-Kiel, 184.

<sup>469</sup> Reindl-Kiel, *Ibid*.

<sup>470</sup> Hedda Reindl-Kiel “The Chickens of Paradise: Official Meals in the Mid-Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Palace” in *The Illuminated Table, The Prosperouse House: Food and Shelter in Ottoman Material Culture*, Suraiya Faroqui and Christoph K. Neumann (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2003), 59-88.

<sup>471</sup> Cited in *ibid*, 88.

those who could recognize it; these people in the know were also those who deserved to be recompensed. The westerners who denigrated the palace cooking were also those considered base and filthy. They may have been served the same food, but they were not in a position to taste its significance.

We can see in these anecdotes and diplomatic accounts how the table became a site of cultural and political negotiation that accommodated playing to two separate audiences. A western audience received news about the reception of embassies through printed reports of such events, wherein reporters were at pains to portray the Ottomans as powerful, but uncivilized – characteristics demonstrated by how they behaved at table. Even though there was plenty of food, the manner in which it was consumed was unappetizing and indicated a lack of perceived cultural refinement, which in turn implied a lack of civility in terms of governance. Table manners were used as a sign of bad governance (*mal governo*, as the Venetian embassy insinuated).<sup>472</sup> Plus, the unfamiliar food lacked sophistication and, in a word, “taste”.<sup>473</sup> The lowness of the Ottoman table thus easily conflated with western cultural codes for “baseness” as formulated in humanist discourse as well as emerging codes of western etiquette. One must also keep in mind that western diplomats and travelers composing reports and printed narratives for a western audience had little that they could control when encountering Ottoman grandeur at the Sultan’s court. There, they were at his mercy and forced to submit to varying often humiliating ordeals (i.e. the toilet gambit). Reporting back home on low tables and strange table manners was a way in which they could raise themselves figuratively through a description of the “Turk” which highlighted Ottoman “lowliness”. For the Ottoman audience, however, the performance of feasting was *live*: those present at the meal were privy to a demonstration of the Sultan’s power, the reach of his empire, and the sophistication of his mighty kitchens, which afforded a flavor of heaven.<sup>474</sup> The glorious spread of so many laid *sofras* in the Council Hall drew all of these dimensions of power projection together.

In today’s parlance, we would say both sides were speaking to their own echo chambers.<sup>475</sup> If we return our gaze back again now to the Bavarian table, we can see how this object functioned as a material embodiment of the kind of discourse being transmitted to the west via diplomatic reports like the Habsburg ones cited above. Just as Niggel detailed the parties thrown by Oettingen-Wallerstein in the German *caravanserai* in Constantinople as binding

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<sup>472</sup> See Lucette Valensi, *The Birth of the Despot: Venice and the Sublime Porte*, trans. Arthur Denner (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

<sup>473</sup> Solomon Schweigger wrote, for instance, “*In Deutschland geht es bei einer Bauernkirchweih stattlicher zu. Doch als wir nun vom Essen aufstuden, da platzen die Tshauschen und ihresgleichen vornehme Personen mit solchem Ungestüm in die übrig gebliebenen Speisen, als wenn Geier (...) auf den Raub fallen...*” Schweigger, 59 – highlighting how even the most “*vornehme*” or proper Ottomans became wild scavengers (vultures) when facing a banquet.

<sup>474</sup> In his final *relazione* back to Venice from Constantinople, ambassador Ottavio Bon characterized the Sultan’s governing style as “*mal governo*” cited in note 193, Hanß, 211. Bon was ambassador to the Sublime Port from 1604-1608.

<sup>475</sup> See Christine Vogel, “Diplomatie zwischen Präsenzkultur und Medienöffentlichkeit – das Beispiel Frankreichs zur Zeit Ludwigs XIV” in *Jenseits der Haupt- und Staatsaktionen. Neue Perspektiven auf historische Periodika (Presse und Geschichte – Neue Beiträge*, Bd. 108) Bernd Klesmann, Patrick Schmidt, and Christine Vogel eds. (Bremen: Edition Lumiere, 2017), 75-94 and Vogel, “Der Sonnenkönig an der Hohen Pforte: Herrschaftsrepräsentation und diplomatische Soziabilität im Palais de France in Konstantinopel” in *Interkulturelle Ritualpraxis in der Vormoderne: Diplomatische Interaktion an den östlichen Grenzen der Fürstengesellschaft (Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung, Beiheft 52)*, Claudia Garnier and Christine Vogel eds. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2016), 121-141.

various western diplomatic factions located in the Sultan's capital, so too did the German table bring together various *western* diplomatic players around the *Spieltisch*. The "Turks" appeared as marginal there, as base and also debased: decapitated, enchained, ruled by children (putti) and hence child-like. Their marginal character was set into relief and visually affirmed by the juxtaposition of the dismembered "Turkish" figures with the western diplomats portrayed in the roundels in the form of fully individualized portraits, whose heads and faces denoted (and stood in for) the rationality and integrity of the person portrayed.<sup>476</sup> These figures have been invited to sit together and partake in civilized translations of the passion of war: chess, backgammon, mill (a siege game) that processed passions and desires into something both more social and more civil, i.e. adult "play".<sup>477</sup> One sign of the civility of this play was the height of the table, raised from the ground and directed toward the head instead of the feet. The "Turks" were not completely excised from the picture, but their presence served to demarcate a boundary between one echo chamber and another; they are located at the table's edge. One must also keep in mind that gaming – chess and backgammon specifically – was in fact something that Ottomans and westerners could share: these games came from the east and Oettingen even gave the Sultan a silver game board as a diplomatic gift on his trip in 1700.<sup>478</sup> (Fig. 26) Yet back at home in the Holy Roman Empire, the Munich table mobilized a table rhetoric which edged out the Ottoman players.

However, as much as western and Ottoman echo chambers were separated, they were also connected, especially through rituals centered around sharing the surface of the table that featured in so many of their encounters. In the context of the diplomatic feast at the palace, this sharing of a common object allowed western diplomats and Ottoman officials the chance to sit together and network; this lubricated diplomatic encounters, and also business since it enabled the dignitaries to establish and deepen relationships with each other. In the context of English embassies to Constantinople, Michael Talbot observes, "the ambassadors reported that their conversations with the Grand Vizier on this occasion were on rather humdrum subject rather than affairs of state, with the Grand Vizier enquiring about the ambassador's journey, mutual questions about each other's family, and compliments passed about the other's country and compatriots."<sup>479</sup> Precisely this sort of small talk is what strengthened interpersonal contacts and built lasting commercial and political ties. The table could accommodate both differences and similarities. Differences in posture, in the height of the table, its relation to the ground and to the body, as well as differences in food culture, marked a boundary between Ottomans and westerners who traveled into Turkish territory during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But in spite of these differences, the institution of the table – embodied in the table as an object, whether a *sofra* or a western table – was evidently capacious enough to facilitate communication

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<sup>476</sup> One notes the homology between individual plates (with their own flatware) and the portrait in a roundel: both reiterate the premium placed on the roundness of the head as a marker of individual *integrity* understood both in terms of wholeness and respectability.

<sup>477</sup> When the electors of the Holy Roman Empire met in Regensburg, for instance, they played cards enthusiastically. At the gaming table, where Hombre and later Pharo were favorite games, the Reich's representatives could sit *pêle-mêle* and escape some of the constraints of ceremonial procedure. This did not necessarily lead to a jettisoning of the passions: gambling was always done for money and massive sums flew over "diplomatic" the table. See Rudolf Reiser, *Adliges Stadtleben im Barockzeitalter: Internationales Gesandtenleben auf dem Innerwährenden Reichstag zu Regensburg* (Munich: Neue Schriftenreihe des Stadtarchivs München, 1969), 58-61.

<sup>478</sup> Sasha Rossman, "On Border Play in Eighteenth-Century Europe" in *Journal18* (November 2016), <http://www.journal18.org/1164>.

<sup>479</sup> Talbot, 118.

and serve as a contact zone across customs. It was flexible enough to accommodate difference, while providing something shared: a contact zone.<sup>480</sup>

One could perhaps say this about all Ottoman-western diplomatic ceremonial. Indeed, dress, for example, played a key role in enabling contact to take place. Ritual encounters also sometimes turned the ground into a kind of interactive gaming table, as when Turkish and Habsburg ambassadors met at allotted locations on their horses and approached one another with measured steps before enjoying a refreshing sherbert together seated in the landscape. Ground, however, was sometimes treacherous and unpredictable, more so, perhaps, than the relatively fixed parameters of a table's top. Describing a meeting with the Habsburgs following the Peace of Belgrade in 1740/41, Ebû Sehil Nu'mân Efendi recounts how the two border commissioners (one Habsburg, one Ottoman) approached each other on horses according to the rules of boundary making; when one was to dismount, the other was supposed to dismount too. But Ebû Sehil noticed that the younger, more spry Habsburg was trying to fake out his Ottoman counterpart by pretending to descend from his horse but then quickly swinging back into the saddle – so that his counterpart would set foot on the ground first and thereby give the Habsburgs precedence. Ebû Sehil thus quickly rode up to them and interrupted the ritual, crying out, “The ground here is one giant puddle of mud and it is raining: here one cannot sit and spend time together. Let us thus simply greet each other and find another opportunity to sit, and carry on.”<sup>481</sup> The table seemingly offered a more resilient and reliable foundation. It was not a boundary in a changing landscape, subject to the whims of men and weather like the borders that Ebû Sehil was laying out.<sup>482</sup> What it was, instead, was a boundary object.

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<sup>480</sup> For a current example of a table as a boundary object between modern Turkey and Germany see Ayşe Şimşek Çağlar, “A table in two hands” in *Fragments of Culture: The Everyday of Modern Turkey* (Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayşe Saktanber (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 294-307.

<sup>481</sup> *Molla und Diplomat: Der Bericht des Ebû Sehil Nu'mân Efendi über die österreichisch-osmanische Grenzziehung nach dem Belgrader Frieden 1740/41*, trans. Erich Prokosch (Graz: Verlag Styria, 1972), 26.

<sup>482</sup> On Ottoman and Habsburg boundary-making in the early modern era, see Maria Baramova, “Negotiating Borders: Habsburg–Ottoman Peace. Treaties of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries” in *Bordering Early Modern Europe*, Maria Baramova, Grigor Boykov, and Ivan Parvev eds. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2015), 115-120; Antal András Deák, “Zur Geschichte der Grenzabmarkung nach dem Friedensvertrag von Karlowitz” in *Das Osmanische Reich und die Habsburgermonarchie: Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung Ergänzungsband 48*, Marlene Kurz, Martin Scheutz, Karl Vocelka, and Thomas Winkelbauer, eds. (Vienna & Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2005), 83-96; Maria Pia Pedani, “Beyond the Frontier: The Ottoman-Venetian Border in the Adriatic Context from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries”, in *Zones of Fracture in Modern Europe: The Baltic Countries, the Balkans, and Northern Italy*, Almut Bues ed. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 45-60; Monika F. Molnár, “L.F. Marsili e gli ottomani. La frontiera asburgico-ottomana dopo la pace di Carlowitz” in *La politica, la scienza, le armi. Luigi Ferdinando Marsili e la costruzione della frontiera dell'Impero e dell'Europa. A cura di Raffaella Gherardi* (Bologna, CLUEB, 2010), 147-172; Mónica F. Molnár, “Borders of the Ottoman Empire: theoretical Questions and Solutions in Practice (1699-1856)” in *Regions, Borders, Societies, Identities in Central and Southeast Europe, 17<sup>th</sup> through 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries*, Penka Peykovska and Gábor Demeter (eds. (Sofia-Budapest: Hungarian-Bungarian Joint Academic History Commission, 2013 ((Jelena Mrgic, “Tracking the Mapmaker: The Role of Marsigli's Itineraries and the Surveys at Karlowitz and Passarowitz,” in *The Peace of Passarowitz, 1718*, Charles Ingrao, Nikola Samardzic, and Jovan Pesalj eds. (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2011), 221-238; Gábor Ágoston, “Where Environmental and Frontier Studies Meet: Rivers, Forests, Marshes and Forts along the Ottoman-Hapsburg Frontier in Hungary,” in (ed.), *The Frontiers of the Ottoman World*, A. Peacock, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 57-79; Firaat A. Abou-El-Haj, “The formal Closure of the Ottoman Frontier in Europe: 1699-1703” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 89, No. 3 (Jul. – Sep.1969), 467-475.

### Episode 3 (in four acts)

#### The State of the Table and the Table of State: Versailles, ca. 1684

##### Introduction

*TABLE, f.f. Meuble fait ordinairement de bois, ou de pierre, qui est sur des colonnes à hauteur d'appuy, don't la surface superieure est plate & unie... Chez les Chrétiens, la Ste. Table, c'est celle où on comunie, ou on fait le St. Sacrifice de la Messe... Ce mot vient du Latin tabula...*

*TABLE, ...se dit aussi d'un meuble de mesnage qui sert à orner une chambre... Dans les galleries & chambres du Roy il y a plusieurs riches tables & buffets de marqueterie, d'argent, garnies de lapis, d'agathes, & autres pierres precieuses...*

*TABLE, se dit non seulement du repas, mais encore des mets qu'on sert sur la table... Tenir table ouverte, c'est donner à manger à tous ceux qui se presentent...*

*TABLE, se dit aussi de plusiers choses qui sont plattes & unis...*

*TABLE, se dit aussi de toute matiere polie, sur laquelle on peut tracer des caracteres soit avec la plume, ou le pinceau, ou le burin, ou le ciseau. Une toile imprimée est une table d'attente pour y faire un portrait. On met des inscriptions, des armes, au haut des grands edifices sur des tables de marbre, ou de pierre, qui sont aussi des tables d'attente. Voilà une table rase disposée à recevoir tout ce qu'on voudra... On die aussi au figure d'un ecolier, qu'on met au College, que son esprit est une belle table d'attente...*

*C'est au sens propre qu'on appellee les deux Tables de Commandement graves sur la pierre & de la main de Dieu...*

*Chez les Romains il y a eu les Loix des XII. Tables, qui furent leurs premieres Loix...*

*TABLE, si dit aussi de la description qu'on fait de quelque partie d'un art, ou d'une science en une feuille pour la faire concevoir tout d'une veue, & soulager l'imagination & la memoire. La Chronologie, la Geographie, ont esté plusieurs fois reduites en Tables...*

*TABLE, se dit aussi d'un Indice our Repertoire qu'on met à la fin, ou au commencement d'un Livre, pour le soulagement du Lecteur...*

*TABLE, en terms de palais, se dit des deux juridictions qu'on nomme la Table de Marbre, don't l'une est la Comestabilie & Merchaussée de France; l'autre le Siège de la Generale Reformation des Eaux & Forests, qui juge au sovereign... Ce nom leur est demeuré d'une grande table de*

*marbre qui tenoit autrefois tout le travers de la sale du Palais, sur laquelle ils tenoient leur jurisdiction. Les jugement de la Table de Marbre...*<sup>483</sup>

Each of the definitions above is an excerpt from the entry for *table* in Antoine Furetière's 1690 *Dictionnaire Universel*, a book that contained (as its title states) "generally all" French words old and new, and which is appreciated today for the way in which it communicates how words in seventeenth-century France were colloquially used and broadly understood. A *table*, we learn, is a piece of furniture whose top is flat and unified. It is something you can lean on, something reliable, a support. A *table* is an object that has Christian overtones: be it the altar at mass, or a charitably open *table* in a home that welcomes strangers. The Christian *table* also carries legal associations: the Commandments, for instance, were presented to Moses on *tables*. This meaning extends, Furetière informs us, from the Romans into the "modern" age, since *tables* proclaiming the French king's authority over forests, rivers, and roads are current legal instantiations of royal centralized authority (these were known as *tables de marbre*). "Table" thus refers to both objects and institutions. They are also plaques hung on buildings to denote ownership and power. We could consider such *tables* to be portraits of a sort; a blank plaque awaits a label, or an image, fashioned with a paint brush, burin, plume, paintbrush or chisel of the person who lays claim to a space. *Tables* are thus also important signifiers, he suggests; they declare, this *is* mine, as opposed to yours, or this *is* France, as opposed to Italy, like a sign at a border today: "you are leaving the American zone". (Fig.1)

The material of the signifiers made a difference, Furetière implies. The French king's *tables* are polished and expensive; they are ornate, fashioned from silver and precious stones. These *tables*, with their unified, gleaming, polished surfaces, conjoin the king's body to a long history of legal propriety as well as moral and political authority that ran from Antiquity to the present: in the Palais de la Justice, in the very center of Paris, a large marble *table* once stood where judgements were made and promulgated for the whole kingdom (it was destroyed by fire in 1618). The *table*'s marble form lent these judgements a dollop of historically sanctioned might, drawing on *tables*' biblical and historical lineage.<sup>484</sup>

The *table* also rendered the communication of information more legible. After all, Furetière explains, a *table* makes things easier to read; it provides a summary and overview of otherwise complex matters (the contents of a book, the thickness of history, the spread of geography). The simplifying power of the *table* finds an apt reflection in the mind of a student, the lexicographer observes, which is also considered a *table* in the sense of a blank slate,

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<sup>483</sup> (sic) Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire Universel, Contenant generalement tous les Mots François, tant vieux que modernes, & les Termes de toutes les Sciences et des Arts: Divisé en trois Tomes* (The Hague & Rotterdam: Arnout & Reinier Leers, 1690), 1983-1984.

<sup>484</sup> On the *Tables de Marbre* and their legal role, see Roland E. Mousnier, *The Institutions of France under the Absolute Monarchy 1598-1789, Vol. II The Organs of State and Society*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), Lucien Bély (s.d.), *Dictionnaire de l'Ancien Régime*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, coll. « Quadrige », 2003 (2e éd.), 1198 (art. « Table de marbre, Tables de marbre »). "À Paris, la Table de marbre tire son nom de la grande table de marbre de la salle du Palais à Paris où le Connétable, l'Amiral et le Grand Maître des Eaux et Forêts exerçaient leur juridiction jusqu'à sa destruction par un incendie en 1618. La Table de marbre juge soit à l'ordinaire (comme une grande maîtrise) soit, à dater d'un édit de mars 1558, en dernier ressort (en tant que Table de marbre)."

<http://www.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/chan/chan/fonds/guideorientation/II-3-3-eauxetforets.htm>

anything smooth and unified that lends itself to inscription (*table d'attente*). The *table* is, thus, a signifier and channel of authority, as well as a body that brings people together, which unites them and makes them legible to one another. The *table* demarcates similarity, but also difference. Here is unity, it says, and *there* is that which fails to conform to the *table's* unifying force. A *table*, if we bring all of these meanings together, is an object which can deploy precious materiality (stones and metals) to define and signify historically and religiously sanctioned authority, jurisdiction, spatial control, and a community of shared values and assumptions. A *table's* materiality matters, moreover, because it is through the *table's* material and shape that authority makes itself manifest and reinforces its claims to legitimacy. The King's *table* is made of marble, a valuable material that carries the weight of historical precedent.

These are all things that Furetière, and his contemporaries, said and thought about *tables*. But what would a *table* say itself, if it could talk? In this chapter, which is in large part about one specific *table's* materiality, I suggest that speaking from the perspective of the object can be a helpful way of beginning to think not only about what people say about an object, but also direct us to attend to what objects tell us themselves. In their muteness, things like tables withdraw from us. But they also simultaneously address us; a table beckons us to look at and use it. It does so through its form and materiality, as well as through its cultural “coding”, i.e. through a culturally determined pattern of use. Thus here, a monologue by the star of this *table* episode will introduce itself: a French *table* made for Louis XIV of marble – a material we have already encountered as symbolically laden with juridical and monarchic meaning in Furetière's universal dictionary.

### *Table Talk*

“It was dark inside the room when the glittering rock crystal chandeliers weren't lit, which is what happened each night once the all the visitors had gone. There was usually quite a crowd; sometimes ambassadors, other times *tout le monde*<sup>485</sup> coming in and out of the *apartements*<sup>486</sup> three days a week to enjoy the King's hospitality. Gambling, billiards, the most sumptuous buffets. I was their last stop. Just after dessert in the *Salon de l'Abondance*, from which they marched up several stairs into my mirror-lined abode. The fruits of abundance flowed over indeed on those party nights when my “relatives” (the other palace tables, as if there were any real rivals) carried the weight of his Highness's generosity and magnanimity. All piled high with silver and food and lit by a thousand candles. Or padded to absorb the weight of balls colliding together like cannon. Click click. Up the stairs into the cocoon, like the entrails of the earth, shining, glittering with a kind of inner flicker.<sup>487</sup> There, everyone looked at me with

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<sup>485</sup> Everyone, in 17<sup>th</sup>-century France, implicitly meant anyone who was anything. And all of those people were in Paris and Versailles, of course, since the French court and the French capital *were* the world, as far as most people were concerned. Though of course, Versailles was also intended to also host the rest of the world, see Daniëlle O. Kisluk-Grosheide and Bertrand Rondot, eds. *Visitors to Versailles: from Louis XIV to the French Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

<sup>486</sup> These were parties established by the King in 1682 when the court moved to Versailles. They took place on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday nights. See the *Mercure Galant* (Paris: December 1682), 1-77 and Madeleine de Scudéry, *Conversations Nouvelles Sur Divers Sujets: Dediées au Roi* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1684), 1-118.

<sup>487</sup> In her description of the cabinet, Mlle de Scudéry wrote, it is “*infiniment au dessus de tout ce qu'on a vû, puis que c'est proprement un assemblage de tout ce que le Soleil a produit de plus rare & de plus precieux, ou dans les entrailles de la Terre, ou dans le sein de la Mer en toutes les parties du Monde, que l'Art a encore orné & embelli, & que l'industrie mesme a rangé & placé sur des Tablettes avec un ordre sie merveilleux & une varieté si grande,*



admiration; chins dropped to the floor. That was the point. That is why I was there, to impress and to be loved. Something truly unusual. Not like anything else. Anywhere. A true rarity. Hence the room where I resided: the *cabinet des rarités*.

So I was never really left alone. There was always a guard standing by in the gloom, ensuring that nobody made off with the various treasures that surrounded me. We were protected. The other things in the room looked a bit like me, though they were smaller. One guard claimed a large rat had strolled through one night, knocking several vases to the floor where they shattered, though in the gloom I thought I saw him knock them over himself.<sup>488</sup> I was bigger, stronger than these small vessels, trinkets really. But we shared a common surface: all gleaming semi-precious stones, with spectacular veins and patterns. or ancient bronzes, extracted from the earth and then polished. Rendered into the form the Creator gave us, made visible though human craft and ingenuity. Everything in the room had been below – minerals, stones, metals – before being dug up and scooped out and set in gilt holders or outfitted with handles or cast and stamped to form an ensemble of *sans-pareils*. *Nec pluribus impar*. We all stood on constant display, resting on console shelves built into the walls, reflected by a thousand mirrors lining the space.

The room had one window, opposite a fireplace made of marble, like me. On the fireplace sat the King's Nef (magnified and multiplied by its reflection in the mirror behind it).<sup>489</sup> It was the biggest Nef (Fig.2) and the most valuable Nef in the world; there was a painting of it just outside the door to our room, in case you forgot that the King's table was so important; the Nef – placed on that table day in and day out – signified its greatness. That I am so important. The nef was the prototype for the one placed on his table day after day, first for the *diner* at one, and later for the *souper* 22:00. Everyone showed up for that event as well. Looking at the nef's doppelgänger, and at the King.

Daylight comes, and sunlight falls into the chamber, illuminating me and the other precious stone objects. Out of the darkness and into the light, which catches the gleam and

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*que cet objet en general paroist un echantement, & ne laisse pas la liberté de s'attacher à nul object en particulier.*" Ibid, 25-26.

<sup>488</sup> The rat incident actually occurred in 1730, when Le Bel claimed to have surprised one who knocked over three rock crystal vessels and one object made of agate. Stéphane Castelluccio, *Les collections royales d'objets d'art de François Ier à la Révolution* (Paris, Les Editions de l'Amateur, 2002), 116.

<sup>489</sup> The Nef held the King's napkins, brought to his table with one side humid and damp, the other dry. The tradition of marking the King's place at the table with the Nef is of old, uncertain origin. Initially, it contained the King's eating utensils as well, but these transferred to a new vessel known as the cadenas, first mentioned in connection with Henri II in 1550. What was significant with Louis XIV's Nef was that it was used at each meal, not only on special occasions. We will return to discuss the Nef later. See Zeev Gourbarier, "Modèles de Cour et Usages de Tables: Les Origines" in *Versailles et les Tables Royales en Europe: XVIIème-XIXème siècles* (Paris: éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1993)18-21. See also Beatrix Saule, who notes that Louis XIV's Nef was fashioned by the silversmith Gravet, prior to 1670, probably after a design by Le Brun. During the Revolution, it was despoiled of its jewels and ultimately destroyed under the Directoire. Saule, "Insignes du pouvoir et usages de cour à Versailles sous Louis XIV", *Bulletin du Centre de recherche du château de Versailles: Sociétés de cour en Europe, XVI<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle - European Court Societies, 16th to 19th Centuries*, <https://doi.org/10.4000/crcv.132>.

polish, the *éclat* that inheres in our stone bodies. Beholders express astonishment at our liveliness; stone that seems to grow. They're alive! They exclaim. The earth's bounty is endless under the stewardship of the monarch. The stones seem to practically fall out of the mountains, to wash up out of the rivers for the taking. I am made of so many rocks. They congeal on my surface, and, I must say, truly as a table, I really only am a surface. A slab. I've been put on legs, but they are exchangeable, if fabulously ornamented. Legs and hands gathered and assembled me, but now I am appreciated by the eyes. A table is its top, and that is me: the head of the table, made up of so many rocks, dug out of the ground and floated over sea and by river. Tightly locked together, these joined stones present a vision of the mechanics which brought them to me: the canals, ship routes, rivers that each individual rock or stone traveled before getting to the workshop at the Gobelins, where Mssrs Megliorini, Branchi, and Gachetti cut, polished, and assembled them to form me. If one stone slipped out, the rest would come loose and fall apart.

So these stones now cohere, all together. They are heavy, a mass. A commitment. A map of France (and some neighbors, who appear smaller, of course). A tightly assembled body of units, perfectly ordered. Each rock different, but each fitted into its distinct place. Each supporting the push and pull of the whole. No one piece overreaching its boundaries. For good measure, I announce my order with a measuring band that surrounds my smooth stoney surface. Longitude and latitude. They locate me and the person who gazes at me. How is one to know that my bits are ordered correctly, that their size corresponds to the relative size of each province, each polity they represent? The ruler tells us so. King and measuring scale, since the measure is his, allowing him first and foremost to make judgements. Not one, but four bands of marble rule me, proclaim the prudence of my (I mean his) rule, my ordered heft. Even, bounded, composed, polished, hard, impermeable. No one can penetrate my surface gleam. I am impregnable. HAE TIBI ERUNT ARTES. So Virgil wrote, and so are his words incised into my marble skin. These, Roman, are your arts: to govern, to rule. My surface declares this rule, over each piece that comprises my body.

*ARE* my stone bits the places they claim to be, or do they just stand in for them? On each stone in France, a name spelled out in golden letters. This IS Burgundy. Different, but connected through the consistent semiotic system to Savoy, to the Dauphine, to Provence, to... The rocks outside of France have also been named; they are labeled by those who put me in order. They have boundaries, but since many are named simply as provinces, like French provinces, it seems that France is expanding: upward to the North and East- out towards the Rhine, which appears as a "natural frontier" between France and the German states, as France moves outward with its signifying potency to what seems to be a division created by nature herself. I am both a representation of France growing, then, and a physical manifestation of that growth: growing stones, an expanding sign system. An empire, like the Roman empire, that grows, returning to the historical grandeur and scale of Roman Gaul, but with a modern ingenuity that only the scientists at the Paris Observatory can provide. Does it matter that my base, white Carrara marble, comes from across the Alps and the Sea from Italy? It has been imprinted, impregnated by my signifiers. It is now me, dominated by France, made French, bound in a French idiom. White Carrara rivers snake through me, flowing like veins to Paris.

I am so heavy. I cannot move by myself. My legs cannot be collapsed, or folded in, unlike the dinner table supporting the king's Nef. I have no flaps and slats. I am just a heavy plane of many parts. But an even surface, a magnificent one, held together by many borders. Each state, each province is bounded; its difference is marked in color from its neighbors. The edges of my coasts are bounded by the white of the sea, imitating the while of a map on paper- or

is it the other way around? I am a sign and an object. But I depend on others to move me. That is how magnificent I am. The others carry me. I order them without speaking. The state of my magnificence is *orders*. And each element that comprises me carries that order, supports its body, its physical state, its “status”. The majesty of its state is *my* state. I am a surprise gift to the King *dieudonné*, called forth by his geographers and his hardstone artisans.<sup>490</sup> And I am like a point of orientation for him and for those who carry me; a compass, like those I adorn myself with on the expanse of the watery white sea that brings my form into relief. I am a stone scape of edges, lines, and surface, from which there is no escape. How could there be? Science, set in stone, affirms how just I am, how correct and this cannot be denied.”

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In previous episodes of *On the Table*, we examined how a table could articulate notions of place and personhood in early modern England. In that context, we investigated how Bess of Hardwick’s *dormant* spoke to emerging techniques of social positioning, network building, and wealth accumulation, processes which her table both celebrated and facilitated. We then saw how, in the seventeenth century, the round (or gateleg table) came to play a crucial role as a political broker in international peace congresses. Since the round table disguised and thereby mitigated power hierarchies, it became a shorthand for a nascent image of state autonomy: a party of states able to negotiate with one another on a supposedly equal footing. But obviously not all post-Westphalian tables were round. And certainly not all baroque tables of state celebrated rhetorical equality.

This chapter further investigates the relationship between states and tables, this time in the landscape of the baroque French court. Specifically, we will analyze the especially opulent and stately (rectangular) table from 1684 that has just introduced itself in the context of its display at Louis XIV’s palace at Versailles. Fig.3 This specific table is of particular interest when it comes to the relationship between early modern European states and the representation (and performance) of statehood because its surface is also literally a map of a state: France, as a cartouche at the tabletop’s upper left announces, declaring the graphic form we see to be equivalent to the concept of a political entity (“*Carte de la France*”). Made of many intricately cut and inlaid pieces of colorful semi-precious stone, each one representing one of the kingdom’s provinces, the table presents an overview of France and western Europe to the kingdom’s ruler and those he invited to share this view with him.<sup>491</sup> Whereas Bess’s wooden Eglantine table told us something about the means of accumulating *private property* and wealth in Tudor England, Louis XIV’s marble table spoke on a vastly different scale: this table was not to be measured by a private home or a marriage, but instead mobilized cartography and design to make global claims about the kingdom and a king as a conjoined entity, the French state for which the table

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<sup>490</sup> On Louis’ “miraculous” birth and its iconography see Antoine Cabanès, *Moeurs Intimes Du Passé Septième Série: Enfances Royales* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1908-1936) and Léo Minois, “Le Voeu de Louis XIII et la naissance de Louis XIV: Observations Iconographiques sur la Célébration du Roi Très Chrétien” in *Les Cahiers de Framespa: Nouveaux champs de l’histoire social* Vol. 11 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.4000/framespa.2009>. It is worth noting the ways in which prayers and celebrations of Louis’ birth anchored themselves both in specific French spaces strewn across the kingdom as well as in the iconographical imagination of the time, although neither author specifically addresses this coincidence of geography and cultic imagery.

<sup>491</sup> That the map declares itself as France, but also shows other polities is a subject we will address presently.

served as a material embodiment.<sup>492</sup> Unlike Bess's table, Louis XIV's furniture did not even belong to him personally. It belonged to the institution of the monarchy, to the king's official body, to the *Garde-Meuble de la Couronne*, which monitored which furniture came in and out of the monarchy's possession. This meant that it was not private, but rather truly a legally inalienable part of the apparatus of French statehood.<sup>493</sup>

Now, a state is an entity comprised not only of one body, but of many bodies even though today we frequently associate Baroque European states with the singular bodies of their monarchical rulers.<sup>494</sup> And this object also was not commissioned by the king himself, but instead came to Versailles as a gift to the monarch from a little-known scientist named Claude Antoine Couplet who served as treasurer and the keeper of mechanical models at the royal *Académie des Sciences* in Paris, founded by Louis at the behest of his right-hand-man Jean-Baptiste Colbert in 1666. The gifted nature of the table gives us pause to think, thus, in a nuanced way about what possibilities were open to representing statehood in the late seventeenth century. For we often think today in somewhat general terms about how the stateliness of Bourbon furniture resides simply in the richness of their materiality, which like the dashing figure of the king was intended to dazzle and impress. Certainly, the Sun King's claims to greatness and international preeminence (and the materialization of these claims at Versailles) are no surprise. The pomp and opulence of Louis XIV's palace famously aimed to project the monarch's ambitions through the deployment of glamorous, unrivaled displays of art, architecture, and technology.<sup>495</sup> The questions that concern us here, therefore, have more to do with the specific ways that this object conflates the figure of the king into the stony ground of his kingdom in the form of a surface that is also a map than they do with the well-known general

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<sup>492</sup> There was a slight difficulty presented by the King's marriage, particularly when the French Queen came from rival Spanish stock, like Louis XIV's mother and his wife. Marriage, and its consummation, presented in these circumstances a moment in which the King's body was not unique, but incorporated into the body of his wife. Louis' wife Marie-Thérèse died in 1684 and this enabled Louis to fully place himself at the center of the symbolic and physical architecture at Versailles. On the issue of his marriage, see Abby E. Zanger, *Scenes from the Marriage of Louis XIV: Nuptial Fictions and the Making of Absolutist Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) and changes at Versailles after the Queen's death see Kevin Orlin Johnson, "Il n'y a plus de Pyrénées: The Iconography of the First Versailles of Louis XIV" in *Gazette des beaux-arts*, vol. 98 (1981), 29-40.

<sup>493</sup> An act registered in parliament in 1566 authorized the alienation of the King's *biens* only under two circumstances- "*l'apenage d'un prince de la famille royale* and to deal with the necessities of war. See Stéphane Castelluccio, *La Garde-Meuble de la Couronne et ses intendants du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Éditions du CTHS, 2004), 27. *Le domaine de la Couronne* included the material goods, land, chateaux, furniture and treasures- including jewels, as well as the incorporeal belongings of feudal rights, fiscal and other privileges and prerogatives, Ibid. 43. These possessions were inalienable, according to the the ordonnance of Villers-Cotterêts of 1539 and the Edict of Moulins in 1566; the latter constituted one of the fundamental laws of the kingdom. It specified under which circumstances the King's things could be legally alienated (e.g. when money is short for war) and also specified that the Crown was supposed to buy back what it had sold when possible.

<sup>494</sup> The Dutch republic provides an obvious counter-example and 17<sup>th</sup>-century Dutch art is therefore filled with group portraits, or city and maritime scenes in which statehood finds expression in a collection of individual bodies as opposed to the iconic images of 17<sup>th</sup>-century France, where the state is rendered palpable in the figure of the monarch, e.g. Hyacinth Rigaud's famous portrait of Louis XIV in his coronation robes. On French monarchic portraiture, especially related to Louis XIV see Louis Marin, *Portrait of the King*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). For a more recent analysis of Rigaud's portrait see Myriam Tsikounas, "De la gloire à l'émotion, Louis XIV en costume de sacre par Hyacinthe Rigaud" in *Sociétés & Représentations* 2008/2 (n° 26), 57 - 70.

<sup>495</sup> Eg. Chandra Mukerji, *Territorial Ambitions and the Gardens of Versailles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) and Jean-Marie Apostolidès, *Le Roi-Machine: Spectacle et Politique au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1981).

ambitions of Versailles to project power through the display of wealth, which we will take as a given. How exactly did this *table* implicate the body of the king into the kingdom as both a geographic and social entity? What could a gift of a table convey, if one thinks of gifting in terms of reciprocal action in the context of materializing statehood?

As a gift, map, and object the table positions Louis *Dieudonné* and his realm in terms that are more dialogic than unidirectional – even though the map on the table is only legible from one perspective. Instead of presenting a portrait of the king’s physique (the type of baroque state portrait with which we are most familiar), this particular representation, the chapter suggests, offered the king and his subjects an image of the French state as an infrastructural power: a cartographic table made for and with the authority of the monarch, which mobilized all of the resources necessary to represent French ground as a stately state. In order for this representation to function, however, ground and kingly body needed to conflate. The table, therefore, shares certain qualities with the king, such as richness and what the French called “*éclat*”, a kind of glimmer, or sheen associated with the sparkle and almost electric force of monarchic power.<sup>496</sup> But it also presents itself as an entity detached from his specifically human body. Instead of linking the state to Louis’s famous corporeal attributes (his shapely balletic legs, his downturned nose, his flowing, gargantuan periwig, his potent member, or even his family’s iconography), the table appears independent of the king’s appendages; its figuration of the state seems instead to have emerged from the ground, which has now become a figure. Its forms trace that kingdom’s outline and it is made from rocks that have been extracted from the ground we see represented, cut into pieces, and moved to the Parisian workshop where the table was fabricated, where they are framed and bound together by multiple bands of polychrome marble, itself taken from the boundary regions of France. The map on the table’s top even shows us the waterways that carried stones like these to the king’s marble depots in Paris: the *Canal des Deux Mers* (officially opened in 1681), the Atlantic, the Seine, and the Oise. The table thus presents not so much an image of the King as an embodiment of authority, but rather figures *state* authority as the ability to harness the human and natural resources, which it took to produce it. In this way, the table materializes a picture of the absolutist French state as emerging *from* its resources, while simultaneously presenting itself as an image of the monarch who controls those resources. In other words, the table presents an image of the state that is not only top-down (gazed at from the perspective of the king), but also bottom up. Tables map social relations, as we have seen in other episodes, and this particular table quite literally maps the king into his kingdom, and vice versa.

Today, our table is missing its original legs and even hangs sometimes on the wall at the Louvre, the final stop on a long *parcour* that began in Louis XIV’s cabinet of curiosities (or *cabinet des raretés*) at Versailles, a room which, like the table’s legs, no longer exists. It then moved to the Trianon (still at Versailles) before landing in the Élysée Palace in Paris, where the

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<sup>496</sup> In his absolutist tract *Politique Tirée de L’Ecriture Sainte* (1679), the Grand Dauphin’s tutor Bossuet defended the monarchy’s exorbitant expenses on material goods against charges of vanity by claiming that they were not vain, but necessary: “*les dépenses de magnificence et de dignité ne sont pas moins nécessaires pour le soutien de la majesté aux yeux étrangers...Dieu défendait l’ostentation que la vanité inspire et la folle enflure d’un Coeur enviré de ses richesses, mais il voulait cependant que la Cour du roi fût éclatante et magnifique, pour imprimer aux peuples un certain respect*” cited in Thierry Sarmant, *Les Demeures du Soleils: Louis XIV, Louvois et la Surintendance des Bâtiments du Roi* ( Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2003), cited 305 (emphasis mine). In 1671, Paul Pellisson in 71 also wrote to Colbert saying that “*Entre tous ces caractères, celui e Sa Majesté doit éclater.*” Ibid, cited 186 (emphasis mine).

French president resides, prior to its current stint at France's greatest national museum. In each location – before and after the Revolution – the object seems to have been able to maintain a sense of propriety as an object of state. Our analysis will, however, not try to reconstruct the table's missing parts, but rather to take a cue from absence of a base to consider how the material production of the table *assembled* a social body in which the king appears as a head (looming above the object's flat surface), while his scientists served as eyes and ears, his artisans as hands, and inspectors as well as laborers as legs and feet in the provinces.<sup>497</sup> It was precisely, I argue, the process of assembly itself combined with the notion of the overview that made tables desirable and important to the Sun King's court at Versailles. They mapped social and spatial relationships in important and new ways, including mapping the body of the King into an emerging new image of his realm, and its place in the world.

In previous chapters, we have concentrated on the symbolic registers of tables more than interrogating how they were constructed and who made them. Now, we will highlight what it took for such an object to be made, and what kind of work mapping and tables did to build the state. We will follow some of the footsteps of the table's material production. This does not mean we will ignore the object's symbolic dimensions. Marble and precious stones were a key part of the display of Bourbon *gloire* because they were imbued with important semantic and symbolic value. This is one of the reasons why certain rocks were so politically important to the expression of the king's grandeur. But the value of *pietra dura* work, and of marble in particular, lay not only in its beauty, religious significance, uniqueness, and sheen, but also, as we will see, in the ways that French marble work demonstrated both a shift of technological and artistic power from Italy to Versailles *and* a consolidation of royal authority over French territory, specifically at the kingdom's edges, which is where "French" marble came from.

We will now first examine the table in terms of the context of its gifting, considering the complex relationships between the Academy of Sciences mapping projects and tables. We will then lay out why marble and marble inlay were so significant to state symbolism in late 17<sup>th</sup>-century France. In considering this question, we will also see how France came to produce stone inlay furniture, and touch on how furniture functioned as representational power under Louis XIV. The king's furniture was designed and manufactured in ways that made it above all other qualities *unique*. That was both the point of royal furniture; it was the source of its authority in the seventeenth century. The production of unique objects, however, necessitated mobilizing resources and people. This mobilization, in turn, overlapped with various types of mapping since cartography strengthened the crown's control of "national" resources and also was instrumental in helping them arrive at the royal workshops. We will, therefore, move outward from the court and the cabinet of curiosities into the French landscape, to regions farther afield to retrace the footsteps of marble from the kingdom's edges to its center. We will then turn to the workshops where the table was produced: the Manufacture Royal des Gobelins in order to better understand how unique furniture like this table could be put together. Finally, we will conclude by thinking about the table's edges, which are wrapped, as we have seen, in not one, but at least four bands of borders, which "rein/reign" in the landscape the table presents in so much detail. Absolutism depended on collaboration, as the historian William Beik has argued.<sup>498</sup> The story of this table is one that supports this thesis, albeit in visual and material terms, which force us to consider the

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<sup>497</sup> Esther Bell and C.D Dickerson III, *The Brothers Le Nain: Painters of Seventeenth-Century France* (San Francisco: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 288.

<sup>498</sup> William Beik, "The Absolutism of Louis XIV as Social Collaboration" in *Past & Present*, 188 (2005), 195-224.

various registers on which material assemblage comes to articulate and produce power in the specific form of a *state*.

### *Stating the Obvious*

A matter of vocabulary seems important to address before we move to Versailles and the Academy of Sciences, however. I have used the word state frequently, but what exactly is a state? It might be helpful to qualify our introduction by briefly introducing a term that seems so familiar to us today. A (nation) state is, for us today, an organized, impersonal entity that derives its form (both physically and in terms of governance) from the lay of the lands, resources, and population that a particular government controls thanks to their monopoly on legal and military force(s). A state tends to *look* like a territory represented cartographically on a map, since its impersonal form is commensurate with the boundaries ascribed to it by convention (though these, of course, can be contested).<sup>499</sup> The use of the word state (like the word territory), however, has a long history and in seventeenth-century Europe, it was not a given that a polity was called a state. Nor was it a given that a polity had a fixed, contained, or cartographic “image” that could stand in as visual shorthand for the governance of that entity. If subjects of a monarchic state like France were subject to a monarch, then they were not subject to a state independent of that person.<sup>500</sup> A bounded unit of land did not define their identity as much as a personal, juridical relationship.

The term can already be found in use in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century in Italy, probably in reference to Justinian’s Digest, which states that “since all law is established for the sake of human beings, we first need to consider the status of such persons, before we consider anything else.”<sup>501</sup> As Quentin Skinner has observed, the modern use of the word state was thus directly connected to ideas of status. The quality of the greatest stateliness belonged to kings because the state of the king was the most majestic, the grandest, unrivaled. This suggests, in turn, how sovereignty was deeply connected to display, and (following Skinner), that “the presence of majesty serves in itself as an ordering force”.<sup>502</sup> It thus became commonplace to connect that status of the king to the state of his realm, or as Froissart observed in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, a country “*en bon estat*” is one in which “everyone would be contented.”<sup>503</sup> A justice, or judge thus ought to act in the best interest of all (following the use of the term in Roman sources, including Cicero

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<sup>499</sup> The literature on the emergence of the cartographic image of the modern state is vast, see e.g. Michael Biggs, “Putting the State on the Map: Cartography, Territory, and European State Formation” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 41, No. 2 (Apr., 1999), 374-405 and, especially, James R. Akerman, “The Structuring of Political Territory in Early Modern Printed Atlases in *Imago Mundi*, vol. 47 (1995), 138-154. On the history of French borders specifically, see Peter Sahlins, “Natural Frontiers Revisited: France’s Boundaries since the Seventeenth Century” in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 95, No. 5 (Dec. 1990), 1423-1451 and the authoritative history by Daniel Nordman, *Frontières de France: De l’Espace au Territoire XVIe-XIXe-siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998) as well as *Histoire de la France: L’espace français*, André Burguière and Jacques Revel, eds. (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1989).

<sup>500</sup> See Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), especially 61-102. See also Sahlins, *Unnaturally French: foreign citizens in the Old Regime and after* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004) on the process of determining and defining “Frenchness” legally.

<sup>501</sup> Cited in Quentin Skinner, “The State” in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, eds. Terrance Ball, James Farr, and Russell L. Hanson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 131.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid, 92.

<sup>503</sup> Cited in Ibid, 92-93.

and Seneca) to uphold the good status of the community as a whole through prudent and wise governance, reflected in the prosperity of the land made manifest in the majesty of its sovereign.<sup>504</sup>

In France, however, the use of the word *state* to describe had entered the discourse of governance specifically with the rise of the Bourbon dynasty as Henry IV ascended the kingdom's throne in 1594 following the sixteenth-century wars of religion.<sup>505</sup> When Henry IV came to power in the wake of the religious strife that had so dramatically torn France apart in the sixteenth century, the common good (*bien public*) of the *république* – as France was referred to by legal theorists like Jean Bodin was no longer *en bon état*, nor did the common good necessarily constitute a positive goal. This, as James Collins has observed, was true in part because in order to achieve a *common* good accepted by both protestants and Catholics, the French monarch would have to demonstrate an independence from the pope and the institution of a new “fundamental law of the kingdom” in which the king was recognized as “sovereign in your state”, as the Third Estate's first article at the Estate General of 1614 made clear.<sup>506</sup> Whereas in the 16<sup>th</sup>-century republican model, the king was bound to a French commonwealth that exerted control over him (a commonwealth fatally split along religious lines, and hence dis-unified fundamentally in their interests), the new rhetorical allegiance to a state, or independent king's status re-oriented the discourse of power away from a *bien public* to which the king was subordinate towards a *bien de l'État* to be wielded against those who would seek to compromise the state by questioning the authority, or “status” of its ruler as sovereign. For seventeenth-century proponents of absolutism like Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (b. 1627), this could be proposed as a model of statehood in which the monarch “embodies in himself the whole of the state: *tout l'état est en lui*.”<sup>507</sup>

The idea of the King's “exceptional” absolute power along the lines described by Bossuet was not, however, an initial, or necessarily integral part of the French concept of the *état*. As James Collins has argued, the early allegiance to the *état* under the Bourbons involved, instead, a redirection of power through the implementation of governance rather than the contestation of governance. It was not the king, but France's judicial elite, Collins suggests, that instituted a new political discourse in which elites (increasingly drawn under the Bourbons from the urban bourgeoisie with legal training that would come to be known as the nobility of the robe) would share in the implementation of policy, rather than in the traditional representative bodies that acted to control and delimit the king's actions (controlled by the nobility of the sword). In this model, the elites would be swallowed into the stately apparatus of a sovereignty directed toward maintaining and improving a *status* that manifested itself in the kingly status of the monarch. For elites who had suffered from religious strife, this offered an attractive possibility. When Henry IV survived an assassination attempt in 1595, the Parliament thus used the rhetoric of the state, “the bottom of our unhappiness would be to survive the calamities of this state...”<sup>508</sup>

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<sup>504</sup> Ibid, 92-94.

<sup>505</sup> See James Collins, “Dynastic Instability, the Emergence of the French Monarchical Commonwealth and the Coming of the Rhetoric of ‘L'état’, 1360s to 1650s” in *Monarchy Transformed: Princes and their Elites in Early Modern Western Europe*, eds. Robert von Friedeburg and John Morrill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 87-126.

<sup>506</sup> Collins, 89.

<sup>507</sup> Cited in Skinner, 118, see also Nannerl O. Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France: the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 241-61.

<sup>508</sup> Cited in Collins, 119.



Dynastic and religious instability thus resulted in a choice by the French judicial elite to share power by joining the royal administration of authority under the rubric of *raison d'état*, a move that avoided sharing power through representational assemblies. Particular interests were to cede to the interest of the state, whose grandeur and health made itself manifest in the grandeur and status of its sovereign, whose body unified the different strands and interests of the polity.<sup>509</sup> Furetière, for example, defines *Estat* first as a “kingdom, provinces, or extent of lands that are under a single domination. The *Estats* of the Turk, the King of Spain, are vast: those of the King of France are strongly united and populated (*fort unis & peuplez*).”<sup>510</sup> The definition appears to draw together geographical space and population (i.e. resources) into a unified, coherent form that undergirds the status of the King, his magnificence. In turn, the King is able to marshal those resources and channel them into aesthetic projects, including furniture, which reflect his mastery of resources back to those who furnished the resources as a *manufactured* image of the stately state. This is not a state that simply exists, but rather one that wears its making on its sleeve: tracing, cutting, quarrying, hauling, dragging, logging, shipping, floating, cleaving, hoisting, carving, sanding, polishing, and gilding (in the case of marble tables).

The concretization of these resources into a manufactured surface under the French King's purview brings us directly back to our table and the year 1683 in which the table was made. In that year, much in the French state and apparatus of governance was changing. Jean-Baptiste Colbert, who served as first minister of state, the head of the navy, the controller general of finances, founded the academy of sciences, and was in charge of the King's furniture and houses (he held the position of *Surintendant des Bâtiments du Roi*, which also meant he led the royal manufactories) died in September. His death followed upon the Queen's, who passed away in July. Colbert had played a crucial role in building the Bourbon state in the first half of Louis XIV's reign and as much as his allegiance to the King was personal, he was also deeply invested in redefining and building the notion of the state along the lines outlined by Collins: a passion for the *bien de l'État*. Colbert incessantly invoked the “state” in his correspondence.<sup>511</sup> He also had done his best to ensure the status of that state and the materialization of the stately Bourbon state's *appearance*: the academy was to map it, while the royal manufactories and the *Bâtiments* were to ensure that it appeared in proper grandeur through the production of suitably splendid and stately (i.e. also unified) architecture and furniture (made in France).<sup>512</sup> Colbert's vision for the state of France was one in which a material representation of France was to make itself legible in the figure of the king's belongings, a France that mobilized natural resources and erected a spectacular and fortress-like impenetrable *état* through that mobilization. Flatness and tables of various kinds played a vital role in that vision, as we will presently see. But in 1683 a new era was beginning in French governance and it was precisely at this moment that Couplet, the treasurer of Colbert's science academy, deemed it expedient to present the King with a new year's gift of a table, which was also a map made of marble stones.

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<sup>509</sup> On the ins and outs of absolutist theory, see Keohane op.cit.

<sup>510</sup> Furetière, 788.

<sup>511</sup> Sarmant, 269.

<sup>512</sup> In 1665, Colbert described the importance of architecture and furnishings in these terms: “*Au défaut des actions éclatantes de la guerre, rien ne marque davantage la grandeur et l'esprit des princes que les bastiments; et toute la posterérité les mesure l'aune de ces superbes maisons qu'ils ont élevées pendant leur vie.*” Cited in Ibid, 304.

## Act 1

### Flatter the Better

Why would someone think that a table (an extremely expensive one) would be a desirable gift for the King of France? Clearly, the gesture is based upon the assumption that there would be something to gain by offering the King an image of his realm in the form of a table. Yet most accounts of the object state simply that the gift testifies to Couplet's career ambitions and leave its table-ness out of the equation.<sup>513</sup> Given the political shifts taking place in 1683 and the prompt replacement of Colbert upon his death by the war minister François Michel Le Tellier, Marquis de Louvois (b. 1641) at both the *bâtiments du Roi* and at the helm of the national budget (including the funding of Colbertian projects like the Academy of Science), there was obviously good reason to present a gift: Couplet and the *Académie* for which he was financially responsible as treasurer wanted to keep their projects funded and their livelihoods secured by flattering the King and showing off how their accomplishments added to his *gloire*. But what would the flat surface of a table made of stone offer specifically? What did the material of the table's surface embody and why was its form (legs and a top) perceived to be appropriate for this particular gifting situation? Why would bounded flatness flatter?

Before we delve into the circumstances of Couplet's gifting, let us return again to the table itself. The table told us that it was flat, heavy, expensive, fragmented but unified, "ruled" in two senses (the King's power, the cartographer's ruler), made of earth (stone) transformed into a *legible* cartographic form, and that all of this had an Antique pedigree, indicated by the materiality and technique of marble *pietra dura*, which presented itself literally as French in this instance rather than Italian, and through the written allusion to Virgil's *Aeneid*. This allusion ("Roman") had been transposed to modern France, hinting that not only was Louis XIV equal to the Ancients, but perhaps greater. For the map on the object's surface was a demonstration of the advances made by modern science: it offered the spectacle (illusion, perhaps) of a world measured by French geometers and scientists as well as portraits of recent French technological accomplishments that the map prominently highlighted, most notably the *Canal des Deux Mers* (which runs as a white stripe of Carrara marble clear across France's southern half, connecting the Mediterranean and the Atlantic in one fluvial line).<sup>514</sup>

Hence, France appears on the map at the map's symbolic and geographic center: it is the largest polity present on the table, where it has pushed its rivals and neighbors to the map's peripheries, which are simultaneously the table's perimeter. Spain is barely visible, cut off from the European political map thanks to the canal, which allowed the French to avoid sailing around the Iberian peninsula when trading with Italy and the Levant. The diminished presence of Spain on the map corresponds directly to French engineering prowess. England is similarly truncated, and the Italian peninsula is cut off at Genoa (where the white Carrara of the table's sea and rivers originated); to the north and the east, the Dutch and the Habsburgs appear diminished in stature compared to the French because France appears to encroach upon them visually. Since each province in the map is rendered in a different stone, France exerts the most visual weight because

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<sup>513</sup> For instance, Florian Knothe, "Pierre Finnes: The Manufacture of Hardstone Works at the Gobelins under Louis XIV" in *Art of the Royal Court: Treasures in Pietre Dure from the Palaces of Europe*, Wolfram Koeppe, ed. (New York/New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art & Yale University Press, 2008), 44.

<sup>514</sup> On the canal and the self-proclamation of France as "New Rome" see Chandra Mukerji, *Impossible Engineering: Technology and Territoriality on the Canal du Midi* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

it is surrounded by the white of the sea, which makes its silhouette highly visible, thanks to the eye-popping clarity with which the white marble of the sea contrasts with the familiar forms of the French coastline. In comparison, the Empire and Low Countries exert less visual clarity since the colors of the stones blur together with less contrast. Flanders and the Dutch republic are, moreover, comprised of smaller stones because their provinces are smaller, and the Empire in central Europe has few recognizable outlines, other than rivers so that its form appears undefined, murky, and open for French aggression which – following the map’s visual rhetoric – would appear visually logical since the Rhine, for example, would appear to offer France a “natural” boundary with graphic clarity. Hence, the map includes and naturalizes France’s very recent military annexations along the Rhine and in Flanders, so that the object seems to stage France as if it were cutting an expanding figure into an indistinct landmass toward the graphically logical borders constituted by rivers and seas.<sup>515</sup> The concerns over precedence that made the round table a necessity for the peace conference have been banished from this rectangle. Here, France occupies the center and it is at the table’s metaphorical head: it dominates and towers over its competitors, whose kingdoms, flat and open, offer themselves to the French monarch’s gaze, thanks to the handiwork of his geographers who provide the tools through which he might craft, visualize, fortify and expand his state legitimately, through the power of metrology. France provides Europe (and the world) with the means of organizing political *rapport* under French leadership, just as French geographers and marble workers had provided the means of setting marble stones from disparate locations into a tight *rapport* on the table (marquetry work was known in France as *pièces de rapport*).

This is what contemporaries also remarked upon, albeit somewhat more obliquely. Our most complete account of the object comes from a report published in the fall of 1686 in the court gossip and fashion magazine the *Mercure Galant* on the occasion of the visit of an embassy from Siam. Louis XIV had rolled out the red carpet for the Siamese entourage; they saw all that France had to offer in terms of splendor: palaces, parks, science, paintings, private collections, lavish food, theatrical productions. They were made witnesses to everything that supported the notion that status of France was unrivaled on a global level. The visit to the King’s cabinet of curiosities was the ambassador’s final stop (and thus at the crescendo) of their visit to the palace at Versailles, where the king had moved the court permanently only four years before (1682), when work on his *apartements* (including the curiosity chamber) was still ongoing. Entering this chamber at the heart of the palace, the Siamese embassy finds it filled with objects of such a high price (“d’un si grand prix”) that they are unmatched, including the golden Nef of the mantelpiece. Here, the table is revealed. It is most remarkable in its “art” the author of the report says, and for the use to which it is destined.<sup>516</sup> That use is never spelled out in the article, but one can presume that unlike the “riche Bureau” designed by Gilles-Marie Oppenordt nearby, on which the King’s medal collection could be admired and inspected, this table’s use was simply to be an object that displayed itself and which measured, in a sense, the scale of the world from which goods flew into the curiosity chamber via the antechamber of Abundance. Its form provided a scale to measure that greatness, as the article says, since it is made with “all of the

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<sup>515</sup> See Nordman, 1998 op. cit. and Nordman “L’idée de frontière fluviale en France au XVIIIe siècle” in *Frontières et contacts de civilisation, Comité français des sciences historiques.*; eds.(Neuchâtel: Éditions de la Baconnière, 1979), 75-93.

<sup>516</sup> Donneau de Vizé, *Voyage des ambassadeurs de Siam en France* (Lyon: Thomas Amaulury, rue Merciere, au *Mercure galant*, 1686), 277-283.

precision of the most recent astronomic observations.”<sup>517</sup> And the author singles out in particular the exactitude not only of the representations of individual provinces, but especially bodies of water and coastlines: the “*délicatesse*” of the object lies specifically, he says, in how one can discern each bay, each cape, each lake and each river “*avec une justesse inconceivable*.”<sup>518</sup> “One couldn't imagine how pleasing it is to gaze at these lines of milk that glisten over everything” (in the table's expanse) and which flow from the sea to the table's heart, as if they were following the direction of the compasses located in the white expanse of the ocean; rivers flowing into a France, which is so remarkable in its *justesse* as this righteousness is metaphorically staged by the altogether “inconceivably” observed and rendered cartographic representation.

The embassy itself had followed similar compasses to cross the oceans and arrive at the French coast themselves, from where they had made their way to Paris and Versailles. They had met Couplet earlier on their journey when they visited the Paris Observatory, where he resided and, as keeper of the Observatory's collections, showed the Siamese everything that French science was capable of accomplishing. Part of this visit included showing off a giant map, also cut in stone into the observatory's floor, but in the giant dimension of twenty-eight feet in diameter. Like the tabletop, this map (the *Mercure Galant* was quick to add), was also the most exact new rendering of the world, and the ambassadors were able to locate Siam under their feet and trace the itinerary of their own voyage to France by ship. In this manner, France became the measure and means by which the Siamese were able to orient themselves globally (or so the *Mercure Galant* portrayed its miraculous effects), an effect they subsequently saw in miniature in the cabinet of curiosities, where it had lodged itself in the entrails of the metaphorical body of the King, his private chamber of unique treasures.<sup>519</sup>

Flat surfaces and tables specifically played a key role in producing these effects. The observatory map obviously replaced the world with it's the representation of the map, so that the ambassadors could “find themselves” through the substitution of one ground with another, a ground rendered legible thanks to French science. Laid out on the surface underfoot, the flattened globe rendered relationships visible and provided a (French) means of worldly orientation. This surface, like the *pietra dura* map was made by using another sort of table: a table of astronomic observations, compiled by one of Couplet's colleagues at the *Académie*. This brings us back to the academy, Couplet and Cassini, and the projects they were working on when Colbert died and a table that staged political relationships through the flat format of a map seemed like an appropriately flattering gift for the King.

Couplet himself is one of the more minor figures in the early French academy of science's history, though he was a member from the get-go. He is best known today for a treatise on a leveling device that he published in 1699 in Paris in the *Mémoires de l'Académie Royale des Sciences* and also work he did on water supply for a town in Burgundy named Coulanges. Rich in wine, but poor in water, Coulanges had suffered from numerous destructive fires, which inhabitants were unable to extinguish in spite of the fact that they were required to store water for such occasions in their homes.<sup>520</sup> According to the memorial written by La Fontenelle and

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<sup>517</sup> Ibid.

<sup>518</sup> “*On ne scauroit croire combien ces lignes de lait qui brillent sur le tout, sont un objet agreeable à la veue.*” Ibid. 279.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid, 50-53. On the map in the Observatory, see Lucien Gallois, “L'académie des sciences et les origins de la carte de Cassini” in *Annales de Géographie*, 1. 15, n. 100 (1909), 308-310.

<sup>520</sup> Bernard Le Bouyer de Fontenelle, *Éloges des académiciens avec l'histoire de l'académie royale des sciences en 1699 avec un discours préliminaire sur l'utilité des des mathématiques*, Vol. 2 (The Hague: Isaac van der Kloot, 1740), 125.

published by the academy, Couplet had solved the problem by scouting for locations in Coulanges “where veins of water flow” and recuperating them through his deft eye and experience with leveling (presumably wielding the instrument he described in his *mémoire* several years earlier). Bells were rung and a *Te Deum* sung. In the 1670s, Couplet purchased his father in law and teacher Buhot’s mathematics professorship at the *Grande Écurie* at Versailles, which meant he had to travel back and forth between the Court and Paris during the most intense period of building and construction of waterworks at the new palace. And as treasurer of the academy, he was in charge of inventorying all of the Observatory and academy’s furniture, instruments, machines, and other curiosities.<sup>521</sup> Water and leveling projects, as well as mechanics (he was the guardian of the cabinet of mechanical models at the Observatory) thus preoccupied Couplet throughout his career.<sup>522</sup>

In that regard, Couplet was not alone, for although the French academy never truly excelled in producing practical inventions to spur French industry, the driving force behind the academy was the idea that its scientists were going to make France a great maritime power.<sup>523</sup> Colbert had founded it in 1666 with the express aim of vaulting France above the Dutch and the English in the international race to establish maritime empires. He had been patronizing scientists and scholars since the early 1660s for the glory of the state, but by 1666 the minister realized that it would be expedient – and also better serve the King’s international reputation – to join those scholars together under the umbrella of the academy, which promised to provide cohesion by enhancing Colbert’s own authority over a group financially dependent on the King’s good graces, with Colbert as a mediator.<sup>524</sup> Colbert, though generally interested in science, was more interested in practical reform plans for “those matters pertaining to the maintenance and tranquility of the State,” as he wrote in his letters.<sup>525</sup> An early proposal dating from around 1664 from a group (“*compagnie*” was the word they used, in reference to joint-stock companies like the English and Dutch East India Companies) of scientists had proposed already to Colbert that their work in the fields of navigation, flood control, new maps, and study of trades could all be profitable enterprises, should the state fund them. By 1666, he had apparently decided that this could provide a lucrative path, bolstering the other mercantile policies that he was implementing, including in the field of furniture production.

Mercantilism is an early modern theory of political economy developed in the context of expanding global trade that holds that a state needs to cultivate its own resources in order to be dominant internationally. Because there is a limited amount of bullion, mercantilists believed, it must be safe-guarded and not allowed to leave the kingdom. Importing goods necessitated the expenditure of bullion, allowing it to flow out of France.<sup>526</sup> It was thus the government’s

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<sup>521</sup> See Fontenelle op. cit. and also Jacques Heyman, “Couplet’s Engineering Memoirs, 1726-33” in *History of Technology* vol. 1 (1976), 21-44.

<sup>522</sup> See Charles Wolf, *Histoire de l’Observatoire de Paris, de sa fondation à 1793* (Paris: Gauthier-Villars, 1902), 42-43.

<sup>523</sup> Robin Briggs, The Académie Royale des Sciences and the Pursuit of Utility, *Past & Present*, No. 131 (May, 1991), 38-88.

<sup>524</sup> On the history of the academy see Ibid, Alice Stroup, *A Company of Scientists: Botany, Patronage, and Community at the Seventeenth-Century Parisian Royal Academy of Sciences* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), and E. Stewart Saunders, “Louis XIV: Patron of Science and Technology” in *The Sun King: Louis XIV and the New World*, Steven G. Reinhardt, ed. (New Orleans: Louisiana Museum Foundation, 1984), 155-167.

<sup>525</sup> Stroup, 29

<sup>526</sup> See for instance Philippe Minard, *The Market Economy and the French State: Myths and Legends around Colbertism*, trans. JPD Systems in L’Économie politique Volume 37, Issue 1, (2008), 77-94 and Minard, Colbertism

responsibility to ensure that the regime acted as a steward of France's resources, a task that included the exploitation of local timber and marble, for example, as well as agriculture, but also promoted the growth of French manufacturing.<sup>527</sup> In this manner, French artisans could create goods made from French resources that they could then export at a profit, bring more bullion back into the country.<sup>528</sup> Every piece of this economic puzzle was tightly interlocked. In order to pursue colonial ambitions, France needed a competitive navy. The harvesting of timber for shipbuilding and the construction of roads and navigable rivers in order to ship the timber were crucial elements of Colbert's plan, as we will later discuss in more detail (in relation to marble quarrying and mapping). Science had its specific part to play, therefore, in the production of Stately French abundance, since in order to control maritime trade effectively, state-of-the-art ships were not enough. France needed to be the best in the field of navigation. And for this, Colbert hoped he could rely on the scientists he imported from around Europe (though keeping them on pension in Paris meant that the related expenditure did not flow out of the kingdom).

In the seventeenth century, the main hinderance to long-distance maritime shipping was incapacity to calculate longitude. Latitude posed no problem, and contemporaries knew that navigation would be infinitely more efficient if there were a system in place to calculate longitude effectively. Without it, even a slight error of less than one degree could result in a 69 mile error at the equator.<sup>529</sup> That meant that extant maps of the Mediterranean, for instance, tended to be as much as six hundred miles off in their depiction of the sea's length.<sup>530</sup>

Colbert intended the academy's founding as a means of rectifying this situation to beat out the French and the Dutch commercially by discovering the key to longitude, which the minister would complement by using his other offices (budget controller, navy, etc.) in order to requisition the materials necessary to build ships and also to show off the glory of French artisanal production, which would grow out of mercantilist dominance. Not war, but commerce as war would be Louis XIV's greatest accomplishment. By the early 1660s, the minister had thus been courting the Dutchman Christiaan Huygens, who was attempting to make a pendulum clock, which could accurately measure time on the open sea and thereby enable sailors to accurately calculate their longitudinal location since knowing the time in two distinct places simultaneously enabled one to read the temporal difference in terms of the measure of distance. By 1665, one year prior to the establishment of the academy, Huygens' clock was ready, and Colbert drew him to France with the offer of a large pension and role in the future academy. But while the clock worked on land, it failed tests on rolling seas. This meant, there remained only one means of accurately calculating longitude, from the shore. And this was through the use of tables: Not physical tables, but information inserted into tabular form on paper.

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Continued? The Inspectorate of Manufactures and Strategies of Exchange in Eighteenth-Century France in *French Historical Studies* 23(3) (July 2000), 477-496.

<sup>527</sup> On the rhetoric of stewardship (*mesnagement*) as an early modern state-building ideology, see Chandra Mukerji, *Impossible Engineering: Technology and Territoriality on the Canal du Midi* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), Mukerji, "The Great Forestry Survey of 1669-1671" in *The Use of Archives for Political Reform in Social Studies of Science*, Apr., 2007, Vol. 37, No. 2 (Apr., 2007), 227-253 and Mukerji, *Territorial Ambitions and the Gardens of Versailles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>528</sup> Minard, op. cit. and on visualizing the role of the colonies in this construct Erica Harth, *Ideology and Culture in Seventeenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 222-309.

<sup>529</sup> On the history (and stakes) of mapping in France see Josef Konvitz, *Cartography in France, 1660-1848* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*

Another glamorous foreign scientist that Colbert had been courting to resolve the longitude problem was named Jean-Dominique Cassini (or Gian Domenico, originally). Cassini had been working on the issue for a while when Colbert offered him a position and a large pension at the academy. He had already finished work on a set of tables detailing the movement of Jupiter's satellites by the time he arrived in France in 1669. (Figs.4-5) Let us consider the aesthetic dimensions of these tables, all the while keeping our marble table and its map in mind so that we might begin to draw connections between them. Cassini's tables provided a set of data marking the eclipses of the first satellite of Jupiter, "which they find almost instantaneous, and with good Telescopes discernable almost to the very Opposition of Jupiter to the Sun." These recordings, sorted by date and made at various longitudes (e.g. the London meridian). Using the charts, a sailor "might be enabled to find the Meridian he was in, by the help of the tables Monsieur Cassini has given us...discovering with very great exactness the said Eclipses, beyond what we can yet hope to do by the moon..." What the tables offered was a complex mathematical means of calculating differences in distance by comparing times. If one location was known and paired with an eclipse time, then a scientist measuring the timing of the eclipse in another place could also calculate longitudinal location. The satellite eclipses offered a parallel between particular points on the earth (or at sea). The calculation method itself is "very Curious", as was noted in the English science journal *Philosophical Transactions* in 1694; it greatly exceeds my own limited mathematical abilities, but for the present argument, the important thing to note is the work that the tables do through their graphic form.

Cassini's measurements take points on a round surface (at this point, it was believed that the earth was a perfect sphere), isolate them from that surface and put them in boxes that can be compared. Lines delineate the boxes from one another along horizontal and vertical axes. These lines and the format of the table are not variable. They offer a fixed framework into which data can be inserted. The boxes are thus filled with information related to terrestrial phenomena, but they furnish a means of separating this information from its terrestrial setting: dates and digits come to stand in for an embedded location and knowledge. This makes the table a unique graphic form that, as Lorraine Daston has observed, lies midway between legibility and visibility.<sup>531</sup> It is a synthetic form that seeks to facilitate the search for patterns by providing an overview that allows one to peruse a simplified field of similarities and differences. Instead of a narrative descriptive form, we see information being conveyed with the graphic clarity that comes from dis-embedding information from its earthly setting and repositioning it on the flat, bounded piece of paper, which is also the printed table that sorts the information.<sup>532</sup> The table thereby *flattens* knowledge in two senses: 1) it first extracts knowledge about the sphere of the globe that is located within and upon that sphere and transposes it to a flat plane so that the

<sup>531</sup> Lorraine Daston, "Super-Vision: Weather Watching and Table Reading in the Early Modern Royal Society and the Académie Royale des Sciences" in *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 78, No. 2 (Summer 2015), 187-215.

<sup>532</sup> On tables and lists, see Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (London: Cambridge University Press: 1977), on shifts in the relationship between orality and the printed word in the early modern period, see e.g. Walter J. Ong, "System, Space, Intellect in Renaissance Symbolism" in *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, T. 18, No. 2 (1956, 222-239. For theorizations of flatness, surface and line see Sybille Krämer, "Flattening As Cultural Technique: Epistemic and Aesthetic Functions of Inscribed Surfaces", in: *Journal of the American Musicological Society* (Discrete/Continuous: Music and Media Theory after Kittler) Vol. 70, No. 1, Spring (2017), 221-256 and Krämer, "Graphism and Flatness. The Line as Mediator between Time and Space, Intuition and Concept" in *The Power of the line*, Marcia Faietti and Gerhard Wolf eds. (München: Hirmer 2015), 10-19. In relation to bookkeeping table, Barthes writes of a veritable "*rage de découper*", an evocative description of the process through which information is dis-embedded and then reinscribed in a new graphic form. Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (Paris: Seuil, 1971), 7.

situated three-dimensional aspects of “place” become two-dimensional and abstract, 2) it flattens differences between those places because on the two-dimensional plane, each of the bits of information becomes comparable to other bits of information because they all share the same formal convention. The shared conventions of representation mean that one place becomes analogous to another (even in their difference) and in that sense they become representationally similar: they appear to constitute a state of unity.<sup>533</sup> In theories of classicism in French art, as espoused by Le Brun, unity of time, space, and narrative as prioritized through the construction of a consistent pictorial world. Mapping and tables in the period constructed a parallel unity. They built a ground work for representing a consistent ground, upon which *Grandes Actions* could unfurl themselves, like dominating the world by figuring out the longitude problem.<sup>534</sup>

For the consistent comparability of times and locations is what enables the sailor, or astronomer (in the service of the King) to create a numerical equation from the information in order to determine his/her longitudinal location, i.e. place on a two-dimensional grid that the astronomer superimposes on the spherical globe. The process is one of simplification and mobilization of information: through its distance from the embedded world it represents, the table creates a new field of operation.<sup>535</sup> The creation of a boundary that separates the table from the world in which it exists allows one to re-approach that world equipped with the operability provided by the table, which has stabilized and fixed that world into place and equipped the mind with a plan to act upon it. As the British social anthropologist Jack Goody wrote in 1977’s *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, “one of the features of the graphic [tabular] mode is the tendency to arrange terms in linear rows and hierarchical columns in such a way that each item is allocated a single position, where it stands in a definite, permanent, and unambiguous relationship to others. Assign a position, for example, to ‘black’ and it then acquires a specific relationship to all the other elements in the “scheme of symbolic classifications.”<sup>536</sup>

To put this in seventeenth-century French terms (following Foucault), one could refer to the *Logique de Port-Royal* (1662), in which it is posited that “the sign encloses two ideas, one of the thing representing, the other of the thing represented; and its nature consists in exciting the

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<sup>533</sup> Ackerman op. cit. highlights the ways in which French state mapping became increasingly coherent under the Bourbon monarchy when it came to presenting the kingdom in terms of a common cartographic scale. Under Henri IV, when the first atlas of France was produced – as we will discuss later – most of the maps were taken from a variety of extant atlases and maps engraved in other polities, which the publisher and engraver of Henri’s new atlas collated together with the result that each province of France appeared at a different scale and different language of signs. It was only in the 1650s with the work of Nicolas Sanson (also to be discussed later), that an image of France as a kingdom comprised of regularly scaled provinces emerged. For French accounts of this history, see Monique Pelletier and Henriette Ozanne, *Portraits de la France: Les Cartes Témoins de L’Histoire* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1995) and Monique Pelletier, *Cartographie de la France et du monde de la Renaissance au Siècle des lumières* (Paris: Éditions de la Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2002). On French atlases specifically see Mireille Pastoureau, *Les atlas français, XVIe-XVII siècles. Répertoire bibliographique et étude* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, Département des cartes et plans, 1984).

On scale in French mapping, see Anthony Gerbino, “Mastering the Landscape: Geometric Survey in Sixteenth-Century France” in *The Art Bulletin* 100:4 (2018), 7-33 and more generally, Paul Emmons, “Size matters: virtual scale and bodily imagination in architectural drawing” in *Architectural Research Quarterly* Vol. 9, Issue 3-4 (September, 2005), 27-235 and on the English context for comparison, Harvey (1993) op. cit.

<sup>534</sup> Thierry Sarmant, *Les Demeurs du Soleil: Louis XIV, Louvois et la surintendance des Bâtiments du Roi (Seyssel: Champs Vallon, 2003)*, 75.

<sup>535</sup> See Josef Vogel, *Kalkül und Leidenschaft: Poetik des ökonomischen Menschen* (Zurich: Diaphanes, 2002).

<sup>536</sup> Goody, 68.



first by means of the second.”<sup>537</sup> The sign (e.g. numerical figures in Cassini’s tables that present celestial occurrences as numbers) has the advantage of limiting complexity by converting the world into dualities: the sign represents, and acknowledges its distance from that which is represented. Once the sign assumes a place (e.g. on a table) among other signs, it produces a kind of knowledge otherwise unattainable in the world *outside* of the “complete table of signs.”<sup>538</sup> Meaning and knowledge are produced in the enclosed field of signs, where the signifying element has “no content, no function, and no determination other than what it represents: it is entirely ordered upon and transparent to it.”<sup>539</sup> The table of signs does not produce *in* the world, but instead facilitates thought operations that offer a fantasy, if not a means, of control achieved through transparency.<sup>540</sup> We remember how the marble table described itself in terms of fragmentation and control; the same can be said of Cassini’s tables and their world-making operability: they fragment information and extract it from its setting in order to offer a provide a grid of numbers that holds the key to control of the seas and global commerce. Such is the promise of the table.

The German polymath and archivist Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz recognized this utility as well and theorized the value of tables for governance in a 1680 text titled *Entwürff Gewisser Staats-Tafeln*. This text, like Leibniz’s *Zur nützlichen Einrichtung eines Archivi* were penned as letters to his employer, the Ernst August, Elector of Hannover, as part of an effort to ameliorate the art of ruling by creating a central “database” (to use an anachronistic term) in which the prince could find and store all information relating to the history, use, legal precedents of his lands, as well as incoming messages and missives from other countries. The figure of the prince was the central node in this constellation, but the prince faced the problem that the information he needed to govern was simultaneously too voluminous and too scattered to be found. It was unruly, but it could be tamed and controlled by the imposition of the table’s linear, hierarchical columns and lines, Leibniz posited. The simplicity of the table, Leibniz he, abetted the governance of a state because it drew together information and made it accessible.

*Ich nenne Staats-Tafeln, eine schriftliche kurze Verfassung des Kerns aller zu der Landes-Regierung gehörigen Nachrichten...diese Staatstafel (soll) ein schüssel seyn, aller*

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<sup>537</sup> Cited in Foucault, 63-4.

<sup>538</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>539</sup> Ibid.

<sup>540</sup> By transparency I mean a claim that knowledge has been revealed without a filter. In this case, for example, there is neither allegory nor a set of “filtering” associations. Graphic simplicity stakes a claim for the transparent revelation of information, even though it simultaneously is predicated upon the translation and transposition of data into a new material and epistemic form. The paper table, like the marble table, is like the Port-Royal’s table of signs in that it declares itself truthful because it is removed from a world that obscures appearances, inflicts them with nuances and shadows, with variability. The table is a ground, but it is not embedded on the terrestrial ground. It is raised above it, and hence highlights the visibility and the contours of the things laid or inscribed on top of it; it is related to, but self-consciously separate from, the world around it. This separation is what paradoxically drives the table’s argument that it operates as a potentially ordering force, or to refer back to Skinner, a *state* of order. On facticity and the early modern rhetoric of scientific *brevitas*, see Juliane Vogel, “Die Kürze des Faktums. Textökonomien des Wirklichen um 1800” in *Auf die Wirklichkeit zeigen : zum Problem der Evidenz in den Kulturwissenschaften; ein Reader*, Helmut Lethen, Ludwig Jäger, Albrecht Koschorke, eds. (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2016), 137-154.

*Archiven und Registraturen des ganzen Landes, als deren Rubriken und Register also einzurichten, dass sie endlich in diese Staatstafel als in ein centrum zusammen laufen.*<sup>541</sup>

The table of state, he thus suggests, is an both an instrument to collect and “thicken” information, which “runs together” into the table’s columns, as well as a key to make sense of this mass of information since the table groups “what belongs together” together and thereby renders it comprehensible “in the blink of an eye.”<sup>542</sup> It was the table, he asserted, that would pave the way for the art of good statesmanship, for the “praiseworthy art of (self) governance.”<sup>543</sup> It would operate, he argued, in an analogous way to maps of land and sea, or architectural plans, which provided a model of how graphic simplicity and the imposition of systems of graphic conventions onto complex forms facilitated control.<sup>544</sup> The table both graphically represented the state and provided the power to rule effectively.<sup>545</sup>

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<sup>541</sup> Leibniz, 341. On Leibniz and the *Staatstafel*, see also Barbara Segelken, *Bilder des Staates: Kammer, Kasten und Tafel als Visualisierungen staatlicher Zusammenhänge* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010), as well as see Markus Krajewski, *The Server. A Media History from the Present to the Baroque* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

<sup>542</sup> Leibniz, 345, “*was zusammengehörtet, gleichsam in einem augenblick*”.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid, “*der bequemsten Instrumente, deren sich ein Herr zu erleichterung der löblichen selbst-regierung bedienen könnte*”.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid.

<sup>545</sup> Mapping and the bordering/tabling of France under the aegis of mercantilist economic philosophy had been happy bedfellows since the early seventeenth century, so Colbert had numerous French precedents to draw upon. The first author to recommend a totally autonomous and mercantilist economy for France in the seventeenth century was Antoine de Montchrestien, who promoted the notion that the grandeur (*gloire*) of one monarch is to be measured against that of other states, each as closed and bordered entities, which can be compared. For Montchrestien’s successors, like Jean Éon, mathematical tables were key in this endeavor. They could visualize (for example, in his text *Le Commerce Honorable*) exactly how much business was being lost to France by *aubains* (naturalized foreigners) funneling money abroad (“*au prejudice des François*”). He writes, “*Pour faire doc voir encore plus évidemment comme quoi les étrangers ont tout le Négoce de la France entre les mains...je rapporte ici un dénombrement assés précis des marchandises don’t les étranger trafiquent en France & un calcul assés exact du profit qu’ils en tirent.*” In order to tear the profits of commerce out of the hands of the French, Éon suggests creating tables that visualize the profits and thereby transfer them to the hands of the French. Montchrestien’s mercantilist imperatives thus realize themselves as columns in a list, which combines mathematical calculation with spatial visualization. An excellent example of this sort of visualization of the French state is a guide to France that Jean Boisseau produced (dedicated to the Marquis de Rostaing) in 1646 calles the *Table Portatif des Gaules*. Earlier guides to France like Charles Estiennes’ seminal *La Guide des Chemins de France* (1552) had framed France as a bounded unit and described the boundaries of the provinces, but used textual description instead of graphic form to do so. But Boisseau’s new guide, on the other hand, transformed France into a conflation of tabular calculation and cartographic visualization. He presented a map of the entire kingdom on one sheet, divided into separate squares. These did not correspond to the provinces (these, like the frontiers are marked in small dotted lines). Instead, each square was numbered and bounded and could be put into dialogue with a number of *tables particulieres*, which contained more detailed information about the already plentiful details that appeared gridded and scaled with remarkable regularity on the map. The map itself contained all sorts of information, including postal routes and rivers for transport, as well as salt collecting stations and administrative entities like *Chambres de Comptes*. Estiennes’ written guide of streets in particular may ultimately have been more useful for travelers, but Boisseau’s map furnished a new image of the kingdom. This image was of a coherent and coextensive, administrated surface filled with resources to exploit for both individuals and for the state. Both could take advantage of the document’s tabular structure in order to calculate profit and movement in a manner that went hand in hand with a veritable *mise-en-abyme* of bordering technologies and processes. Fig. 7 On developing notions of absolutist space, statistics, and mercantilism, see David Bitterling, *L’invention du Pré Carré: Construction de l’Espace Absolue sous l’Ancien Régime* (Paris: Michel, 2009). On Montchrestien see Bitterling, 39-50.

In the first representations of the French academy of science, the rhetoric of the power of tabular transparency made itself manifest in the simultaneously practical and metaphorical form of the table, that is, a table with a top and legs at which the King could sit. Fig. 6 In a life-size painting from the late 1670s by Henri Testelin (b. 1616) and Charles Le Brun that was originally intended as part of the tapestry series fabricated at the Gobelins (like our marble table) depicting the triumphant life of Louis XIV we see the French King seated on a raised dais.<sup>546</sup> Louis leans on a table to his left, resting his arm at its edge so that his left hand elegantly dangles into the room, effortlessly clasping a folded piece of paper whose contents are hidden from the viewer. As etiquette demanded, Louis is the only figure seated and the only one wearing a hat. In his right hand, he brandishes a shiny cane, which functions as a counterweight to the closed piece of paper in his hand: information received at left (and guarded), while the cane visually connotes the King's authority in space, like a military baton (or his signature red heeled shoes, which we see prominently displayed on the carpeted dais in front of him).<sup>547</sup> It is as if the information received in written form feeds his ability to command. Behind the King a large entourage fans out. On his left we have the court, including his brother. To his right, we see Colbert, also standing on the dais, but gesturing toward the company of scientists who occupy the painting's left half. The intersection between the minister (and founder of the scientific *compagnie*), the King, and the table form the paintings conceptual and visual heart. Here, things run into the table, as if to a center, to borrow from Leibniz's formulation.

The way in which Testelin and Le Brun have organized the image articulates this idea through several facets. Obviously, Louis and his "right-hand man" are at the image's center. But more subtly, the artists have depicted the ideal of information flow, as described by Leibniz. At the paintings lower left and right hand corners, we find turning dorsal figures positioned adjacent to globes. On the left, the anonymous figure seems to be rolling a terrestrial globe into the room's center, which the man behind him holding a green cloth has just unveiled. Here we see, as if in marble marquetry, colorfully divided images of land (Spain, in red, France in blue, etc.) The globe is tilted to expose the Atlantic and draw attention to France's western coast, as well as to Africa and South America: this is the direction that France will take when establishing the colonies so important to Colbert's mercantile project.<sup>548</sup> Huygens and his pendulum clock are both visible between the globe and Colbert. On the lower right, we find further measuring instruments, this time of a celestial nature, and a celestial globe. These elements constitute the astronomical component of French science, which itself is intertwined in the mercantile project, as we have seen. Cassini is the figure sporting an embroidered golden cloak, eighth from the left, next to Huygens who is positioned below several exotic skeletons. To the right of the skeletons is the Paris observatory, which in fact had not yet been built. In terms of the image's rhetoric,

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<sup>546</sup> A protestant, Testelin would ultimately will be thrown out of the French academy of painting and exiled to the Netherlands in 1681 (where he died four years later). On the series of tapestries celebrating Louis XIV's greatest triumphs, see Fabian Stein, *Charles Le Brun: La Tenture de l'Histoire du Roy* (Worms: Werner, 1985) and Wolfgang Brassat, "Monumentaler Rapport des Zeremoniells. Charles Le Bruns *Histoire du Roy*" in: *Städels Jahrbuch*, N.F. Bd. 14 (1993), 251-288 and Brassat, *Das Historienbild im Zeitalter der Eloquentz. Von Raffael bis Le Brun*. (Berlin: Studien aus dem Warburg-Haus, 2003)

<sup>547</sup> On canes see Kurt Stein, *Canes & Walking Sticks* (York: Liberty Cap Books, 1974) and on the King's military baton see Saule, 2005 and Godehard Janzing "Le Pouvoir en Main: Le Bâton de Commandement dans l'image du souverain à l'Aube des Temps modernes" in *L'image du roi de François Ier à Louis XIII*, Thomas W. Gaehtgens and Nicole Hochner eds. (Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 2006) 245-80.

<sup>548</sup> On Colbert's projects for Africa specifically see Benjamin Steiner, *Colberts Afrika: eine Wissens- und Begebungsgeschichte in Afrika im Zeitalter Ludwigs XIV* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2014).

however, the building, like the skeletons and the armillary sphere speak to the power of science to generate insight by simplifying and codifying information; to make the world *transparent* through scientific *in-sight*. These are instruments for ascertaining the truths that lie within the world, and then re-presenting them as signs. Thus, to the right of the observatory, we see a giant map. On the map is the image of the *Canal des Deux Mers*, which like the observatory, had not yet been built, but which had been approved that very year by Colbert, at the urging of the Languedocian *gabelle* (salt tax) collector Pierre-Paul Riquet, who was never present at the academy in Paris, but who appears between Colbert and Louis behind the table. Information gathered outside *in* the world thus flows in an almost perfect circle to Louis' table, which is full of scientific prints (more skeletons), designs for fortifications, and other books. That which was three-dimensional enters his purview in the form of information translated into two-dimensions and laid out on the table. This is why the table is so crucial to the image. It is the instrument of knowledge transfer. The King is the recipient of information about the three-dimensional world, turned table, and he is its guardian. His access to otherwise hidden information is his power.<sup>549</sup>

Yet this power is shown to depend on collaboration. The King's table must be fed by his scientists, under the lead of Colbert. They appear in the image as crucial agents. The king is at the apex of the hierarchical pyramid, and the nobility may be at the heart (the blood) of the Kingdom, but the scientists are the eyes and the hands that keep the blood flowing. Their assistants, like the peasants, are France's feet, according to seventeenth-century French corporeal metaphors of statehood.<sup>550</sup> The state structure we find represented is thus on one hand pyramidal, although inverted in the sense that the King's apex is deeply embedded in the image's center, rather than on top of the picture. But it is also horizontal, in the sense that the King's judgements, his prudence, his wisdom, and his power depend on the leg-work of his specialist scientists, who will produce the tables of information necessary to operationalize French global dominance. Notably, the actual table's legs in the image are hidden beneath a carpet. The carpeted table was a tradition Louis inherited from his father, and which would disappear in the course of his reign, but here it is tempting to think of how the table's hidden legs draw added visual attention to the legs of the King, Colbert and the company of scientists.<sup>551</sup> There is no question that Louis remains the head of the table, but the power dynamics represented indicate that this head rests upon a planar structure, the legs, eyes, and hands that support the table's surface. In the image, these appendages blend seamlessly conceptually with the table, but emerge as visually distinct.

This simultaneously merging yet distinct relationship is what defines the relationship between monarch and scientists as reciprocal. Indeed, most of the academy's work in fact presented itself under the guise of gifts. Its publications, as Alice Stroup has noted, tended to

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<sup>549</sup> The table that makes everything visible is, therefore, a secret. It is like the secret *coffre* buried in the heart of each of Vauban's fortresses. In his treatise on siege warfare, Vauban writes that at the center of each citadel, there ought to be a locked box, containing information: *Un coffre bien fermé, dans le cabinet du commandant, don't il aura une clef et l'intendant l'autre; ce coffre, contenant les ordres secrets du gouvernement, pour ce qui regardera la défense de la place, jusqu'où il désirera qu'elle soit poussée: les ordres sur la succession au commandement, en cas de mort du commandant pendant le siege, et un certain nombre de commissions et de brevets en blanc pour remplacer les officiers des corps qui viendront à manquer.*" Vauban, *De l'attaque et de la defense des places* (La Haye: Pierre de Hondt, 1737): 79-80. Foucault writes – as if to confirm our reading of Testelin's painting, "*le centre du savoir, au XVII et au XVIII siècle, c'est le TABLEAU*" in *Les Mots et les Choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 89.

<sup>550</sup> Esther Bell and C.D Dickerson III op cit. On corporeal metaphors and the early modern state see also Albrecht Koschorke, Susanne Lüdemann, Thomas Frank and Ethel Matala de Mazza, *Der Fiktive Staat: Konstruktionen des politischen Körpers in der Geschichte Europas* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2007).

<sup>551</sup> Vincent Cochet, "L'Utilisation par les menuisiers et les ébénistes" in *Identifications des marbres*, Jacques Dubarry de Lassale, ed. (Dourdan: Éditions H. Vial, 2001), 37.

circulate as presents, rather than purchases.<sup>552</sup> It was a model of professionalism that gathered specialists with practical and theoretical goals and abilities, who were to consolidate the crown's authority by expanding its ability to control and mobilize resources and, in turn, be rewarded financially through government appointments and other rewards "gifted" by the crown for services rendered.<sup>553</sup> The organization's bureaucratic model thus stressed not only its usefulness to the state, but also – as visualized in Testelin's image – insinuated a kind of embeddedness and necessity in the creation of that state. Louis XIV was not a hands-off ruler. He wanted information; "*De longues...*", Louvois wrote in 1683, the year Couplet commissioned the marble table. The King wants "*le detail de tout.*"<sup>554</sup> He wanted the information necessary to govern and he wanted it quickly. "*Il n'y a point de temps à perdre,*" he wrote to Colbert in 1680.<sup>555</sup> Thinking with Leibniz's writing from the same year, Louis wanted a *staats-tafel* and the academy positioned itself as if it could supply one, abetted in this case by the smooth touch of Testelin's academic brush.<sup>556</sup> The flow of knowledge appears so easy, so transparent.

The idea of using statistical tables as a means of gaining an overview of a kingdom's riches was, thus, gaining traction in the 1680s, linking notions of centralization and governmental control to a corresponding visual technology. Oversight was linked to a fantasy of centralized control: as the French historian Philippe Minard has written, "*si le commerce veut être libre, le commercant et le fabricant veules être surveilles.*"<sup>557</sup> Colbert believed, as he expressed in a letter from 1682, that the minds of merchants are never interested in what is good for the state as a whole, but rather only focus on "their small interests and specific business."<sup>558</sup> Flattening French resources and commerce into a table meant exposing them to surveillance, as well as providing the means to ameliorate the circulation of material goods when tables were used for cartographic purposes.<sup>559</sup> But the language of calculation was slowed by the

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<sup>552</sup> Stroup, 27-45.

<sup>553</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>554</sup> Cited in Sarmant, 278.

<sup>555</sup> Cited in Ibid, 275.

<sup>556</sup> Testelin was an original member of the French *Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture* and played an active role in the academy's activities, becoming a professor in 1656. In 1680, he published his *Sentimens des plus habiles peintres sur la pratique de la peinture et sculpture, mis en tables de préceptes, avec plusieurs discours académiques, ou conférences tenues en l'Académie royale des dits arts*, a text that included, as its title suggests, several "tables" in which information was presented in the unified graphic form of a table that incorporated Ramist diagrammatic features as well as figurative illustrations. These images were accompanied (or themselves accompanied) printed versions of the Académie's lecture series (*conférences*). See e.g. the expanded, reprinted version: Henri Testelin, *Sentimens des plus habiles peintres sur la pratique de la peinture et sculpture, mis en tables de préceptes, avec plusieurs discours académiques, ou conférences tenues en l'Académie royale des dits arts* (Paris: Chez la Veuve Mabre-Cramoisy, 1696). <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1516423w.image>

<sup>557</sup> Minard (1998), 16.

<sup>558</sup> Cited in Birgit Schneider, *Textiles Prozessieren, eine Mediengeschichte der Lochkartenweberi* (Zurich: Diaphanes, 2007), 213.

<sup>559</sup> The first statistical tables to be implemented by Colbert were intended for use in the textile industry where state regulation was implemented at three levels: organized trades including guilds regulated at the bottom: manufacturers working in the trade had to register at a clerk's office of city hall or with a local *juge de police*. Guild masters were all registered, of course, in each guild hall. In each city and town, a new *bureau de visite et de marque* was set up which was essentially an inspection office that all local goods had to pass through. In the *bureau*, cloth was inspected by clerks (*gardes jurés*) and, if the wares passed inspection, the cloth received a lead seal, or a stamp, for which one had to pay one *sol*. *Gardes jurés* were elected, so they also needed to be controlled offices and were thus subject to surveillance and approval based on their ability to eliminate non-standard objects. In the textile industry, this meant checking looms in person. Meanwhile, cloth merchants had to check goods at the *bureaux de controle* that were set up at markets and shops and fairs where the cloth was tagged again. In this manner, each item was to

intractability of materiality. The table of signs didn't always translate into material results.<sup>560</sup> For example, after Colbert's death, his son (the Marquis de Seignelay, who had inherited control of the Navy) ordered model ships to be built in different French harbors, which could be shipped to Versailles and shown to the King. They were to be compared and evaluated by the King on the Grand Canal. If we take Cassini's tables as a model, we would say, the ships *should* be comparable because they should have been made at the same scale, so that they could be laid out on the "table" of the canal and evaluated. Only the models that arrived were at a different scale since distance imparted challenges in early modern communication and the demonstration was, therefore, a failure since the models could not effectively be compared.<sup>561</sup> Statistics collected in tables were riddled with errors too, plus the collected data needed to be stored and this foiled the construction of a truly transparent monarchical line of vision since papers tended to pile up on the ministers' working tables.<sup>562</sup> Louvois would complain in 1685 to his son, "*Vous savez en quel estat je puis trouver ma table quand j'ay esté quatre jours sans voir aucun papier.*"(sic)<sup>563</sup>

In terms of Colbert's dream of establishing the academy of sciences as a means of producing accurate maps in order to build the mercantilist empire (as well as efficient ships, or other mechanical devices), there was a long way to go. With only around twenty members, first of all, the academy was too small to truly dominate the world of mapping and mechanics. Its true function was perhaps much more to guide and symbolize new directions in science than to conquer. In the world of trade and economics, technological innovation more frequently emerged in the actual production of material goods (e.g. the development of poured glass at the St. Gobain

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be inspected and marked twice. The seal bore the name of the place of fabrication *and* site of inspection. On the final regulatory level was a check on the officers and judges to make sure they were doing their jobs properly. For this Colbert named a *commis aux manufactures*, an inspector for each province. These inspectors were specialists in the field and were closely supervised while being trained. They are not well paid, but served as the eye and hand of the government in the provinces. See Ibid, 209-230 and Philippe Minard, "L'œil et la main de l'Etat: les missions des inspecteurs des manufactures en France au XVIIIe siècle" in Quaderni fiorentini per la storia del pensiero giuridico moderno, ISSN 0392-1867, Vol. 26, N° 1 (1997), 85-137. It was only in the 1720s that what might be called a "rage" for statistics truly emerged in France, but even statistical tables to be filled out by inspectors later in the 18th century manifest numerous errors that indicate that they never offered a truly efficient means of control since the material conditions of actually collecting and storing information were never ideally optimized and collected human errors that generally could not be – and were not – corrected.

<sup>560</sup> For a contemporary take on the circulation of information and its conversion through various types of tables, see Bruno Latour, "Circulating Reference: Sampling the Soil in the Amazon Forest" in Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 24-79. Latour concludes, "You can now look at a map of Brazil in an atlas, at the area around Boa Vista, but not for a resemblance between the map and the site whose story I have been recounting. This whole tired question of the correspondence between words and the world stems from a simple confusion between epistemology and the history of art. We have taken science for realist painting, imagining that it made an exact copy of the world. The sciences do something else entirely – paintings too, for that matter. Through successive stages they link us to an aligned, transformed, constructed world. We forfeit resemblance, in this model, but there is compensation: by pointing with our index fingers to features of an entry printed in an atlas, we can, through a series of uniformly discontinuous transformations, link ourselves to Boa Vista. Let us rejoice in this long chain of transformations, this potentially endless sequence of mediators, instead of begging for the poor pleasures of *adequatio*..." Ibid, 78-79.

<sup>561</sup> Larrie D. Ferreiro, *Ships and Science The Birth of Naval Architecture in the Scientific Revolution, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 68-70.

<sup>562</sup> See Schneider 209-230 on statistical errors.

<sup>563</sup> Letter from Louvois written on 23.10.1686, cited in Sarmant, 155.

mirror company after 1690, as well as innovations in weaving, particularly in the 18<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>564</sup> The academy's successes were also highly dependent on Colbert's influence with the King. In 1668, Colbert had asked the company of scientists to suggest how maps of France could be improved. He had already demanded in 1663 that his officials in the provinces send information to the capital that included accurate maps and descriptions of each French region regarding anything that could be of potential interest to the government (taxes, military divisions, etc.). The information, however, was funneled to the *géographe du cabinet* (or arm chair geographer) Nicolas Sanson, who's work we will discuss in depth later. Suffice it to say for now that since Sanson's maps were not made on site and relied for their basis on older, extant images of France, Colbert (and his scientists) were convinced that they were inaccurate. And they were right. Yet he could still plug the information that Colbert's informers were gathering into a highly detailed format that had its own uses, as we will later discuss. In a sense, Sanson's maps furnished a kind of half-way point between textual description and cartographic plotting. It is his map, interestingly, that we see on the marble table that Couplet gave to the King.

Hence the push to reform mapping deployed a combination of astronomical tables and hard work on the ground. It did not *only* involve sitting in an observatory looking at Jupiter's satellite through a telescope, but necessitated actually trudging around the French landscape with measuring devices, like Couplet would later do in Coulange with his levelling device. In 1669 Cassini had arrived in Paris, where he, Jean Picard (b. 1620), and other members of the academy (perhaps Couplet) set off into the *environs* of Paris with new measuring tools. Picard in particular was convinced that what they Academy needed to do was lay a meridian through Paris, which would serve as a point of orientation from which other measurements could be made. That is to say, if Cassini's tables could be oriented from the starting point of the observatory, and the observatory was precisely located on a meridian, the French cartographers could move through the countryside extending the meridian and plotting points accurately by comparing their astronomical observations at different sites to the observations done at the observatory. Because they thought that the earth was spherical, they believed they would also be able to plot on a global scale; since the arc of the meridian would, Picard hypothesized, not attenuate and flatten at the poles, but rather remain regular and thus provide a means of calculating the globe's perfect circumference (with Paris at its conceptual center).<sup>565</sup> The project of mapping France and the project of mapping the entire globe were, thus, linked.

The academy, spearheaded by Cassini and Picard, believed that this mapping project would be best accomplished through geodetic triangulation (the measuring technique we saw emerging in late Tudor England estate mapping when we discussed the plane table). Throughout the first half of the 1620s, triangulation and still depended on unwieldy and extremely complicated trigonometric tables.<sup>566</sup> Cassini's tables offered a means of simplifying the operation, but both he and his fellow academicians knew that they were not entirely accurate. In 1671, Picard departed for Denmark where he worked in Uranienburg comparing his data on Jupiter with Cassini's, so that Uranienbourg could be correctly plotted in terms vis-à-vis Paris, where Cassini remained collecting comparable data (like the stones in our table, these locations

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<sup>564</sup> See Briggs, 74 and on innovation in mirrors at St. Gobain, see Dedo von Kerksenbrock-Krosigk, "Glass for the King of Siam: Bernard Perrot's Portrait Plaque of King Louis XIV and Its Trip to Asia" in *Journal of Glass Studies*, Vol. 49 (2007), 63-79.

<sup>565</sup> Lucien Gallois, "L'académie des sciences et les origines de la carte de Cassini" in *Annales de Géographie*, t. 18 n. 100 (1909), 289-310.

<sup>566</sup> Konvitz, 2-3.

would be set into dialogue by *rapport*). When Picard was back, he, Cassini, Philippe de la Hire (b. 1640) began travelling around France, making measurements at various locations, while Richer was sent to Guyana in 1672 to measure the longitude of Cayenne. Cassini called on other scientists to send their eclipse data, so he could improve and complete the tables.<sup>567</sup>

Tables, however, meant nothing if they could not be made with accurate measuring tools. For mapping was simply not de-corporealized rationalized computation, but also an insistently physical process that involved tromping around the French countryside outfitted with tools (for simple estate mapping, these tools were often just chains, which *arpenteurs* – not geographers - dragged through fields).<sup>568</sup> By 1669, Picard was using, for example, a state of the art instrument of enormous scale (a ten-foot radius) to triangulate the Parisian country-side, a project that resulted in his 9 leaf set of *Cartes des environs de Paris* (1678), which established the scale that would later be used to build a consistently measured map of France (1/86/000).<sup>569</sup> A manuscript set of instructions still exists penned by Cassini and now in the Paris Observatory's archives, which informs us about how Cassini expected measurements to be taken by those academicians travelling around the country. One of the aspects that he highlights as key is levelling, since one needed to use a level to assess distances without distortions posed by altitude differences.<sup>570</sup> For our purposes, what is important to retain is that the production of an accurate map of France involved both a physical inspection and measurement of land, the improvement of material techniques of measurement and levelling *and* the deployment of statistical tables. Both of them depended on establishing abstract sets of planes upon which France could be mapped, but neither were divorced from actually inspecting land.

By the early 1680s, Picard had realized that in order to truly complete the most accurate map of France, as the King had ordered in 1679, the academy would need to make new measurements of France's coastal towns, since his expeditions in Brittany had revealed that current maps presented Brest, the kingdom's main naval base, thirty leagues too far to the west. A new coastal survey would not suffice, however, in determining the position of France in the world, since each of the triangulation projects that the academy had undertaken was separated from the others. What was necessary, declared a memorandum that Picard wrote in 1682 to Colbert, was establishing an overarching frame ("*chassis*") into which the individual puzzle pieces, which the Academy had been collecting, could be inserted.<sup>571</sup> We can get a sense of these "pieces" from the annotated manuscript drawings that de la Hire and Picard were compiling on the Breton coast.<sup>572</sup> Fig. 8 Quickly noted down, the triangles are different sizes, but equipped with calculations that allow them to be brought into *rapport* with one another in a manner that would make the French state visible as a whole, but only if an overarching *chassis* provided a measured means of linking each bit. Picard suggested that this frame ought to be the boundaries of France, which they would then fill in by first creating a North-South axis of triangulations

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<sup>567</sup> See especially Gallois, op. cit.

<sup>568</sup> Mukerji (2007), 237.

<sup>569</sup> Gallois, 290-308 and Konvitz, 4-7.

<sup>570</sup> Jean-Dominique Cassini (1625-1712), "Instruction générale pour les observations géographiques à faire dans les voyages (4 feuillets)," *Bibliothèque numérique - Observatoire de Paris*, consulté le 11 août 2020, <https://bibnum.obspm.fr/ark:/11287/2LmWH>.

<sup>571</sup> Picard, "*Mémoire Présenté A Monseigneur Colbert Touchant la Carte du Royaume par Mr Picart*", cited in Gallois, 292-293

<sup>572</sup> Ibid. Jean Picard (1620-1682) et Philippe de La Hire (1640-1719), "*Observations faites par Picard et La Hire sur les côtes de France, décembre 1679-19 novembre 1681, pages 72-75*," *Bibliothèque numérique - Observatoire de Paris*, consulté le 11 août 2020, <https://bibnum.obspm.fr/ark:/11287/3J7Ql>.



from Dunkerque to Perpignon, linking two recently acquired territories through the Paris meridian all along the length of the Kingdom. Fig. 9 His memoranda continues, “once this grand axis is finished, we can make one that comprises the whole Kingdom following its frontiers, and its coasts, a second route linked to the first.”<sup>573</sup>

A structure would need to be laid over France first that would cover the entire territory, bringing it together in the form of a scaled map so that all of the extant triangulations measured could be linked in a network that would conjoin the Kingdom’s ground with the accurate astronomical tables of Cassini. Dividing and measuring land would offer the king a surface that could be controlled in new ways, fulfilling the promises of the mercantilist project thanks to advances in science. France would cut a new figure, and its monarch would too. In terms of our table, we can see the hint at a material translation of this idea. The pieces of the object, as we will discuss later, are not regularly shaped triangles. Indeed, they follow the borders of provinces rather than obeying the logic of geodetic triangulation. This is what allows different regions and kingdoms to stand out more clearly. At the same time, however, the makers of the table have gone out of their way to present a “*chassis*” in multiple bands of stone that hem in the image, as if hugging its stones together. Fig. 10 These individual pieces, like bits of a puzzle, come together within this frame (and thanks to insertions of instruments like scale measures and compasses) to render this a presentation of Europe and hence (following French cartographic logic) the globe *legible* and controlled. When Le Brun gave the Siamese embassy a tour of the hard stone atelier at the Gobelins manufactory where the table was made, he informed them that “*toutes les Pierres qui entrent dans cet Ouvrage [pietra dura] sont Pierres precieuses, & l’on en taille de si petites qu’il est Presque impossible de les voir avant qu’elles ayent esté mises en oeuvre. Ce travail est d’une tres grande longueur à cause de la dureté de la matiere....*” (sic)<sup>574</sup> The process of mapping and the process of assembling the *pierre de rapport* table reveal themselves to be conceptually and physically related, or at any rate, logically relate-able.

As an object, the table made this process of figuration legible along multiple registers. It presented itself as an assembled and measured mass of information, and offered the king a materialization of the figure of France that symbolically and materially represented his command over space and technology at the same time. If the new crew of administrative *intendants* that Louis and Colbert had been dispatched to the provinces to collect information and tame the local aristocracy throughout the 1660s were the *ears* and *mouths* of the central government, then Picard, Cassini, Couplet et al. can be understood as the regime’s idealized legs, hands, and minds.<sup>575</sup> These legs were the table’s legs, and also the minds that enabled the table to stand, to lift itself up from a ground so that this same ground could be made legible through the process of detachment and reassembly into a flat, discrete surface. This tabular surface, in turn, aimed to insure a new “golden” flow of abundance, which would stream into the Kingdom via sea, river, and canal, finding a symbolic terminus at Versailles, in the *Salon de l’Abondance*, which was the anti-chamber to the cabinet of curiosities, where the mosaic map table stood. Viewed in this way, we can see how the table made sense as a proposition that the body of the Academy could transform the *pêle-mêle* of French ground into a figure whose scaled (ruled) nature would

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<sup>573</sup> Gallois/Picart, translation mine in Ibid, 6. See also Monique Pelletier and Jean-Jacques Levallois, *Mesurer la Terre : 300 ans de géodésie française* (Paris, A.F.T., 1988) on the geodetic tradition in France.

<sup>574</sup> Mercure Galant op. cit, 105.

<sup>575</sup> On the role of provincial inspectors put in place by the Bourbons to wrest control from the nobility, see Orest Ranum, “Courtesy, Absolutism, and the Rise of the French State, 1630-1660” in *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (Sep., 1980), 426-451.

bespeak the rule of the Bourbon central authority *and* provide this authority with a spectacular richness und singularity that could be put on display, like the King himself, in the heart of his palace.<sup>576</sup>

The exquisite renderings of France's coastlines and rivers demonstrated were important in this rhetoric. They represented the maritime edges of the Kingdom, and as such the means by which Colbert hoped to conquer France's rivals, by obtaining riches that would flow through the land in abundance. Affluence, according to Furetière's dictionary, came from the verb *affluer*, which meant: "to meet up at one point. It is said first about waters that flow to one spot. There is not one river in France into which more waters *affluë* (flow) than the Loire...great affluence and abundance of goods is made with the help of rivers. *Affluer* also signifies, to arrive in abundance...like the riches and *délices* that flow to the court of France."<sup>577</sup> While for the Academicians, all information ran together in the tables being assembled in the Observatory on the Paris meridian, for the king, this resulted in a parallel flow into Versailles. The connection was both literal and symbolic. Goods were to come into France, which would overflow with riches, but rivers also metaphorically embodied the Kingdom, and King's lifeblood. For the symbolic language of French potamography (the description of rivers) was linked in the seventeenth-century closely to the King's body and its lifeblood. As Sieur Louis Coulon had written in his *Les Rivières de France* (1644), the French hydrographic network crossed the countryside as if it were "the veins of the human body."<sup>578</sup> And this body was understood to be the King's, as the culmination of his lineage and, indeed, all of the bodies of the kingdom for which he was a symbolic *Pater Familias*. The very first atlas of France *Le Théâtre francoys* (1594), produced by Maurice Bouguereau for the first Bourbon monarch Henry IV, had highlighted the Loire specifically as marking the origin of the house of Bourbon,

This country is washed by several rivers, that is, from the Loire, Father of Gaul's rivers, into which enters the Vienne (originating in the Limousin) at Candes, at the line between the Touraine and the Anjou, above Saumur, a former presidial seat. Also entering, below Monsoreau, is the rivulet from the springs of Fontevrault, the abbey of ladies as honorable as any in the kingdom, under the good and saintly leadership of the abbesses who have been there of late, even of the happy and praiseworthy memory of the late Louise de Bourbon, a saintly and virtuous lady, not at all diminishing that of her niece, Madame

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<sup>576</sup> The king's bedroom was the apogee of the state apartments; it was the richest in terms of the materials deployed. But it is also the one in which the King's representative, allegorical stand-ins (like Apollo), are conspicuously absent. They are only visible from the outside, on the exterior of the room's shutters. Instead of representations of the King, we find in the bedroom the allegory of France presiding over the King's sleep, brandishing the accoutrements of Justice, since balanced judgement is the key to sovereignty. Through the lack of referential iconography, the King's body is put on display, while at the same time, the recourse to "state" iconography *not* directly linked to Louis XIV's Apollonian body highlights the way in which objects like the bed, or the marble cladding belong not to him personally, but to the state: they are constitutive of his *estat*. See Stéphane Castelluccio, "L'appartement du roi à Versailles, 1701: le pouvoir en représentation" in *L'appartement monarchique et princier, architecture, décor, cérémonie*, Thomas W. Gaehtgens, Markus A. Castor, Frédéric Bussmann and Christophe Henry, eds (Paris/Heidelberg: DFK Paris/arthistoricum.net, 2017), 70-84.

<sup>577</sup> Furetière, 55.

<sup>578</sup> Cited in François de Dainville, *La géographie des humanistes* (Paris: Beauchesne et ses fils, 1940), 281.

Eleanor de Bourbon...a true mirror of sanctity and the stock of this good king Saint Louis, the beacon of the Bourbons...<sup>579</sup>

This descriptive language of flowing, entering and conjoining streams was like a family genealogy, as Tom Conley has observed. Fig.11 Versailles's control of waterways and coastlines thus conveyed a sense of terminus as well as origin. The mapping of France, its conversion into a table, would give the King a figure that he already had, but was unable to perceive – or fully achieve - without the Academy's help. To use Bouguereau's words, France would transform through mapping from a "pile of things" (*c'est amas*) into a linear *dessein*, which meant both a drawing and a plan. The simplicity of the cartographic rendering, the transformation of something jumbled and multi-layered, into a linear surface was, therefore, not only a rendering, but a means of mobilization and a call to action. At Versailles, the proof of this action would be the waterworks that the academicians were helping build while at the same time measuring the country. Picard, for instance, in 1674 while he was travelling around France observing Jupiter, was also channeling water to the Chateau, deploying the leveling techniques he was honing in his cartographic practice. He showed, in fact, that it was ill-advised to try to divert the Loire to Versailles, and came up with a different scheme of water flow instead. De la Hire would continue this work at the same time the table was being made, working on the project to build a new canal bringing more water to Versailles via Maintenon.<sup>580</sup> Couplet, as we have seen, was also deeply involved in water projects. These flowed together with the academicians' work on cartography, because mapping and moving resources were deeply intertwined as part of a project of both mobilizing and making legible the power to shape the earth.<sup>581</sup> Importantly, the process of this shaping was one which, as we will see, would reveal France as she already always *was*, but which had never been seen as before Louis' glorious reign; she would emerge like a pre-existing sculptural form being freed from the block of marble in which it was embedded.<sup>582</sup> The table was an instrument that would help realize this process, but it was also a product of that same process. It was structural, but also symbolic. Like the King, the table was simultaneously a point of origin, a means, and a symbol of the process of assembling a state and rendering it visible, with *éclat*.

This was the context of Couplet's gift. Great strides had been made on the project to triangulate, and Cassini's tables had been improved, but there was much work left to be done.

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<sup>579</sup> Translation in Tom Conley, *The Self-Made Map: Cartographic Writing in Early Modern France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 224. On Bouguereau's atlas see Conley, 202-247 and François de Dainville, "Le Premier Atlas de France: Le Théâtre François de M- Bouguereau 1594" in *Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques: Actes du 85e congrès national des sociétés savants, Poitiers, 1962. Section de Géographie* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1962), 1-51.

<sup>580</sup> See Sarmant, especially 253-255.

<sup>581</sup> Mukerji (2009).

<sup>582</sup> In 1703, in his *Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement human*, Leibniz wrote, "*je me suis servi aussie de la comparaison d'une pierre de marbre qui a des veines, plutôt que d'une pierre de marbre toute unie, ou des tablettes vides, c'est-à-dire de ce qui s'appelle tabula rasa chez les philosophes. Car si l'âme ressemblait à ces tablettes vides, les vérités seraient en nous comme la figure d'Hercule est dans un marbre, quand ce marbre est tout à fait indifférent à recevoir ou cette figure ou quelque autre. Mais s'il y avait des veines dans la pierre qui marquassent la figure d'Hercule préférablement à 'autre figures, cette pierre y serait plus déterminée, et hercule y serait comme inné en quelque façon, quoi qu'il faudrait du travail pour découvrir ces veines, et pour les nettoyer par la polissure, en retranchant ce qui les empêche de paraître.*" Cited in Sophie Mouquin, *Versailles en ses marbres: politique royale et marbriers du roi* (Versailles: Arthena, 2018), 23. We will return to this topic in the next section of this chapter.

When Colbert died at the beginning of September in 1683, it would appear reasonable that the Academy would want to continue this work, as well as its work on establishing waterways, particularly at Versailles where work on the gardens and palace continued in full force.<sup>583</sup> The object could serve as a demonstration of projects that could only benefit from further support now that Colbert was gone. These projects would, the table suggested, enhance the glittering *status* of the King's majesty by drawing (together) his state and stabilizing it through the process of mapping, which involved a demonstration of possession (the cartographer's literal walking of the land) and a demonstration of superior reason, thanks to Cassini's tables and the Academy's ability to deploy them and thereby play France at the vanguard of seventeenth-century applied science and international trade. The table was flat and unified, like a table and a kingdom should be, and it was *just* because it was measured correctly *and* because it was balanced, like a King's prudent mind, outfitted with all of the information that the flat table revealed.<sup>584</sup>

Yet there are a few aspects of the object that do not quite square up with this neat package. To begin with, Picard died in 1682, but not before he made a sketch of a map of France's west coast that featured his new cartographic coastal measurements superimposed over an older map by Sanson. Fig. 12 Famously, in this rendering, France suddenly appeared to have shrunk by one fifth of its area, causing the King to complain that the Academicians had repaid him poorly for all his kindness.<sup>585</sup> Yet this is *not* the map on Couplet's gift, which means that the gift given was not one that actually demonstrated the advances being made in French cartography. The reference to science was present in the detailed rendering of the coasts and rivers, as well as the compasses, but the academicians would have seen clearly that frame of longitude and latitude which supposedly lent the map its prestige was *off*. Was the choice, then, to present the King with a map that would flatter him by returning to an image of his state with a falsely inflated form, so that it appeared even larger compared to its rivals and neighbors, but with a stamp of the Academy's approval? Moreover, was Couplet acting as treasurer on behalf of the Academy, in which case it seems odd that the Academy is not mentioned in the table's inscription, or was he acting on his own? In Fontenelle's eulogy for Couplet, he notes that he had both frequently worked for private individuals and that he was a man of modest means who always struggled to foot the Academy's bills (which must have taken a while to be repaid by the Crown).<sup>586</sup> If a square foot of *pietra dura* work done at the Gobelins cost "more than a thousand *écus*" (as Le Brun bragged to the Siamese ambassadors on their tour), then this object must have represented a truly considerable – indeed seemingly entirely out of reach – investment for Couplet.<sup>587</sup> And yet, his name is emblazoned on it. Was he currying favor not only with the King, but with Colbert's replacement at the head of the royal *Bâtiments* and the Academy, Louvois by reverting to Sanson's map and rendering it in marble? Some of these questions will forever remain unanswered, since there is no record left of the commission. Yet we can try to answer others by investigating the importance of marble on a symbolic and material level and by introducing Louvois, whose priorities differed markedly from his predecessor Colbert.

Unlike Colbert, whose passion for building the state through trade coalesced around his positions as head of the navy, head of the *Bâtiments*, and finance controller (among other posts,

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<sup>583</sup> In 1685, the Marquis de Dangeau estimated that there were 36,000 people working on the *chantiers* at Versailles. Sarmant, 131.

<sup>584</sup> On the cultivation of prudence as a virtue and French kings see Isabelle Flandrois, *L'institution du Prince au début du XVIIe Siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992).

<sup>585</sup> Lisa Jardine, *Ingenious Pursuits: Building the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 138.

<sup>586</sup> See Fontenelle, *op. cit.*

<sup>587</sup> *Mercure Galant* cited in Knothe (2008), 50.

including protector of the science academy), Louvois was a military man. He had been Secretary of War since 1643, designated already by Mazarin as a faithful supporter of the King during the Fronde.<sup>588</sup> Like Colbert, he was passionate about building, but his interests were tethered to the land and not the sea. His fortunes had been rising prior to Colbert's death, but 1683 marked his final ascent to the pinnacle of power next to the King as he assumed control of finances and buildings, while keeping his top job as *Secrétaire de l'État de Guerre*.<sup>589</sup> The political climate was one of renewed French aggression, which was fortuitous for the bellicose and ambitious marquis.

The peace settlement at Nijmegen in 1678 had failed to quell the King's territorial ambitions, and he saw possibilities to exploit loopholes in the peace treaty to consolidate his hold on France's northern and eastern borders, providing the state with a set of solid and defensible frontiers. This was a position most vociferously called for by Louvois' master of fortifications, Sébastien Louis le Prestre de Vauban, who observed that "the *frontière* would be well fortified if we reduced it to two lines of fortresses, imitating the disposition of ranks in battle," a "line of iron": a double band of strongholds that would repel any attack.<sup>590</sup> His obsession, starting with the Nijmegen treaty was to create a coherent, linear-type border all around France that was legible and defensible from within and without, eliminating the complex interwoven sets of politically divided enclaves that characterized France's eastern edges.<sup>591</sup> "*Le Roi devrait un peu songer à faire son pré carré...C'est une belle et bonne chose que de pouvoir tenir son fait des deux mains,*" he wrote in 1673, highlighting the notion that a tightly bounded and framed unit that was coherently unified and visible, could be more easily held militarily.<sup>592</sup> This was a different kind of *chassis* than that proposed by Picard. The new frame was to be one of stone, erected like a band of iron around France. Fig. 13 In order to build this "fortress France", *earth* needed to be moved, mountains to be carved and rivers and coasts to be turned into walls.<sup>593</sup> We

<sup>588</sup> Sarmant provides a detailed survey of Louvois' early years in the first chapter(s) of his monograph.

<sup>589</sup> Ibid.

<sup>590</sup> Sébastien Louis le Prestre de Vauban, *Memoire sur les Places Frontières de Flandres*, November 1678.

<sup>591</sup> "It seems to me illogical to bolster up all our other frontiers with two lines of fortresses," Vauban wrote to Le Pelletier 19 November, 1700, "and not have a single line of strongholds in Upper Provence." He thus began where the lack of mountain and river boundaries was most acute, in the north east, but worked his way around through Provence, along the Mediterranean coast (where Antibes and the conquered holdings of Nice provided a "fortified region which will prove impenetrable to enemy attack by land or sea," as he wrote again to le Pelletier in 1693. Vauban cited in Christopher Duffy, *The Fortress in the Age of Vauban and Frederick the Great 1660-1789* (London: Routledge, 1985), 87. Fortifications on the Atlantic and Chanel coasts were, of course, part of the master plan. Duffy observes that Vauban was "entranced with the reflection that (except for a couple of gaps) you would be within earshot of French fortress guns all the way from the Swiss border to the Channel." Ibid, 86. In a memo from 1678, Vauban, who is more insistent on peace than the King, the maréchal seems to think that in the future, fortifications will no longer be necessary, though he also talks about how to "*régler promptement une nouvelle (frontier) et la si bien fortifier qu'elle ferme les entrées de notre pays a 'ennemi'*" cited in Joan deJean, *Literary Fortifications: Rousseau, Laclos, Sade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 42. As deJean observes, by 1706, when he starts to write the defensive treaty, this defense becomes necessary seeing as Europe has united against France; after the Treaty of Nijmegen in 1678, Vauban clearly thought that France was less vulnerable, encouraging him to fantasize about creating a – to use deJean's words, "defensive nirvana". It is then, in 1678, that he begins to develop the concept of the *pré carré* and imagine the construction of a set of fortifications that would frame France in a perfectly defensible shape, "*impenetrable à l'ennemi par terre et par mer*" Cited in Ibid, 42.

<sup>592</sup> Cited in Ibid, 43.

<sup>593</sup> In the Alps at Sisteron, for example, as we see in Fig. 13, a rocky outcropping had been outfitted by Jean Errard de Bar-le-Duc and then remodeled after an incursion by Vauban in 1692. The folding arcaded stone wall appears to link the structure above to the ground below, imitating the form of the mountain peak behind it both formally and materially. Even strongholds in open plains were obliged to meld with the landscape. The words that signified these

recall how on our marble table there were not one, but four bordering bands of stone. As Chandra Mukerji has observed in numerous works on the transformation of the French landscape under Louis XIV's brand of absolutism, the built environment and *earth* and *water* works specifically became a new and potent site of political action in the seventeenth century, since war and building in the landscape, i.e. the government-sponsored construction of fortresses, canals, ports, etc. "imprinted the political order onto the earth, making it seem almost an extension of the natural order."<sup>594</sup> Earth works, she writes, modulated (and we might add modeled) the landscape in ways that made the countryside, Versailles itself, and cities at the border into a "recognizable political space to help define France as a singular power."<sup>595</sup> In other words, moving ground with military force provided a new means of conceptual and physical mapping, as opposed to the paper astronomical tables and maritime prowess that Colbert had hoped to deploy for similar state-building purposes.<sup>596</sup>

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(merging) edges into the landscape were many. They included "esplanade" (a green strip), "contrescarpe" (counterscarpe), "talus" (embankment) and "glacis" (ramp). These designated points of contact between the structure and the landscape, though, as de Jean observes, they concealed the political nature of this juncture (the "no man's land") behind the screen of neutralizing structural terms that highlighted the convergence of wall and earth. See deJean op. cit. 20-75. In certain cases like Briançon, which stands on a pinnacle so precipitous that the plan-relief stands ten feet high, "he wrapped an irregular bastioned trace around the existing town and augmented the natural rock formation to create the citadel and the surrounding forts." Martha Pollak, *Cities at War in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 52. The French celebrated the capture of the Savoyard fortress of Montmélian by pulling a model of the town through the Grande Galerie Versailles, where it was presented as a romantic crag with medieval turret. The performative act of dragging the rock through the palace performatively reiterated the ways in which the drawing of Vauban's iron boundary around France aimed to visually and materially supply the King with a *grasp* on/of his Kingdom. Fig. 14

<sup>594</sup> Mukerji (1997), 1.

<sup>595</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>596</sup> It was his "sharp eye for ground" that, according to Christopher Duffy, was one of the engineer's greatest assets. He tirelessly travelled the lengths of the frontiers, carrying a pad and paper around to each site, where he recorded the landscape in sketched form as well as several plans, as well as in lists that detailed the conditions, the works, the (projected) construction or renovation, and the advantages they promised to bring. The "tirelessness" is Vauban's own (self)description and we may take it with a grain of self-mythologizing salt although it certainly appears to actually be the case. As Duffy recounts, the engineer was both talented and assiduous in his work: "Vauban spent almost every winter in Paris poring over sheets of plans. For the rest of the year, he spent most of the time touring the frontiers in his coach, or, when the going was especially bad, in a letter suspended between two mules. "There is not a single watch-tower in all the king's fortresses which will move so much as an inch at my command... Just think of all the tramping," he wrote to Louvois. Cited in Ibid, 73. In an English version of the *Nouvelle manière de fortifier de M. Vauban* (printed in 1702), for instance, alongside extensive literature on geometrical figures, trigonometry, and measuring techniques we find a lengthy treatment of various types of grounds, pointing to Vauban's acute attention to local contexts and details, to which the ideal forms of his fortresses had to be adapted. What are the advantages of building a fortress into rocky ground? Into marshy ground? What of the quality of the earth? Is it better to be surrounded by water or in an open plain? How does the engineer build to exploit the advantages of each situation and mitigate the disadvantages ("we may confirm that the places that are all encompassed by water, which cannot be quite drained... are the best, notwithstanding, because they are, as it were, fortified by Nature"; "The best kind of Earth for Fortifying is that which they call Fatty or fertile ground because 'tis pliable..."). Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban, *Nouvelle manière de fortifier de Mr. Vauban. The new method of fortification as practiced by Monsieur de Vauban... together with a new treatise of geometry. The third edition. Carefully revised and corrected by the original. To which is now added, A treatise of military orders. By W. Allingham* (London: Freeman, 1702), 92-96. This concern for the quality and situation of a fortification was merited not only by strategic necessity, but also because the forts literally embedded themselves in the earth and were made from it. The fortifications at Longwy, for example, "involved shifting 640,000 cubic metres of rock and earth, and raising 120,000 cubic metres of masonry, and this was far from the largest of the undertakings." Duffy, 6.

Moreover, Louvois profited from the King's frustration over the expenses of the work at Versailles, which Louis attributed to Colbert's personal inefficiency. Perrault reported that on one occasion, the King had reprimanded Colbert after returning from a visit to the frontier by noting, "*Je viens de voir les plus belles fortifications du monde et les mieux entendues; mais ce qui m'a le plus étonné, c'est le peu de dépense qu'on y a faite. D'où vient qu'à Versailles nous faisons des dépenses effroyables et nous ne voyons Presque rien de fait? Il y a quelque chose à cela que je ne comprends point.*" (sic)<sup>597</sup> France, Louvois bragged, was going to surpass anything the Romans had been able to achieve militarily, and in terms of fortifications.<sup>598</sup> This did not mean, however, that the "tabular" fell out of the political equation. On the contrary, Vauban's writings are positively bristling with tables. Part of Louvois/Vauban's project of fortifying France involved expanding and consolidating French territory through the construction of the iron border of fortresses, which was justified by the notion that Louis' France was stretching back to the "natural frontiers" of Ancient Gaul.

In the period of Bourbon consolidation of state power in the seventeenth century, the word frontier had come into general use to describe France's edges. During the middle ages, *frontière*, as the historian Lucien Febvre wrote in the 1960s, meant either the façade of a church, or the front line of a military unit (who were supposed to face, or *faire front*, the enemy).<sup>599</sup> It dropped out of favor in the sixteenth century, when it was replaced by words like *limites*, or *lisières*. By the seventeenth-century, however, *frontières* had back into fashion as a means of designating the border of a France "encircled" by Habsburg forces. Pushing outward against these forces was framed not only as a political necessity, but as a matter of historical duty. In his *Political Testament*, Richelieu had written for example that "it was the goal of my ministry to restore Gaul the limits that Nature has traced for her, to submit all the Gauls to a Gallic king, to combine Gaul with France, and everywhere the ancient Gaul had been, to restore the new one."<sup>600</sup> The seas, rivers, and mountains supposedly marked where these natural borders lay. When Vauban nestled his fortresses into rocky outcroppings, or moved water and earth to embed ramparts into the landscape, he reiterated the vocabulary and ideology of French "natural" boundaries, just as Couplet's table mobilized visual language in order to subtly promote French expansion outward to the border of the Rhine. Thus, for Louvois' ministry of war, Vauban's new bastions and spikey *ravelins* were buttressed with the authority of history. On the other hand, Vauban grasped that he was not only fortifying France against the outside by conquering space *outward*, but also laying siege to the space within the walls of fortress France in order to better protect and exploit the human and natural resources of the land these walls contained; he wrote, "If we want to last a long time against so many enemies, he [the king] should think about tightening up ("*se resserrer*")."<sup>601</sup> This is where tables came into play.

The framed interior vista of France, and each fortress along its borders, was key to Vauban because he understood that taking stock of internal resources would enable the interior to

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<sup>597</sup> Sarmant, 44.

<sup>598</sup> Convinced that France was surpassing the Romans in both military and architectural power, Louvois wrote to his father about the French taking of Dunkerque, "*Les ouvrages des Romains qui leur ont donné tant de reputation, n'ont rien de comparable à ce qui s'est fait ici*". The same held true for Lille, "*la plus belle maçonnerie que l'on puisse voir.*" Cited in Sarmant, 46.

<sup>599</sup> Lucien Febvre, "Frontière: the word and the concept" in *A New Kind of History from the Writings of Febvre*, Peter Burke ed. (London: Routledge, 1973), 208-218.

<sup>600</sup> Cited in Peter Sahlins, "Natural Frontiers Revisited: France's Boundaries since the Seventeenth Century" in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 95, No. 5 (Dec., 1990), 1425.

<sup>601</sup> Cited and translated in deJean, op. cit. 43.

survive - as in a siege – and ultimately triumphantly prosper. This, not maritime trade, was the basis of his principal theoretical apparatus. His texts, therefore, are full of tables filled with minute calculations about what provisions are necessary to survive a siege. Calculations in his defense *mémoire* direct themselves toward figuring out how many days a stronghold can survive depending on its size. If the size can be calculated, one can determine which provisions are necessary. His table thus lists not only obvious provisions related to war like gunpowder, but also paper (of various types), nails, sheets (for the dead and for the living), veal and pouty for the wounded, cheese for three months (accounting for two days a week), stock-fish and dried eel, green eel, cinnamon, tobacco (“supposing that a man smokes four pipes a day”).<sup>602</sup> The lists go on for pages, with the types of supplies listed on the left, while the number of bastions is listed at the top.(Fig.15) In this way, Vauban could calculate the amount of provisions necessary depending on the scale of the fortress and the reader can follow his calculations by matching a provision with the number of bastions and finding the resulting estimate at the point where the two meet in the field of columns. One can either run one’s eyes over the columns, or trace them with a finger so that it is easier to find the point of intersection. In other words, the diagrammatic form of the table makes information easy to grasp, with the eye and with the hand. They conjoin in this way abstractions (numerical calculations) with very material objects, somewhat in the manner that Vauban himself used to describe the measurement unit he dubbed “a thumb’s breath: is the length of twelve lines, of which one is a Barley-Corn’s distance from the other.”<sup>603</sup> As much as these visuals dematerialize and abstract, they also transpose information in a manner that makes a material landscape available, placing it in the hand of the King. This translation seizes, if one wants to use the fortress metaphor, a landscape and renders it visible by fencing it off with linear borders that equate the edges of the table with the edges of the fortress and, further, with the edges of a territory, provided that the territory is also clearly bounded. The square, or *pré carré*, thus becomes a framework that creates a homology between the form of the table, the fortress, and the territory.

The obsessive tracing and retracing of individual borders between provinces, as well as the thick bordering of the map/table’s edges on Couplet’s table seems related to the interlinked conceptual and aesthetic strategies detailed above. Moreover, Vauban’s drive to use borders in order to produce calculations of inner resources dovetails nicely with the ideas of contemporary theorists of absolutism like Bossuet, who wrote, for example, that “All the powers of the nation flow into one, and the sovereign magistrate has the right to pull them together... Thus the sovereign magistrate has *in his hands* the entire strength of the nation which has submitted to obey him... each person gains by this exchange, for each discovers in the person of this supreme magistrate more force than he has given up in order to authorize it, for each finds here the force of the united nation for his support.”<sup>604</sup> We can easily transpose Bossuet’s idea to the form of both the *pietra dura* table and the statistical table. The nation is diverse and divided naturally into pieces, whether regions, resources, or professions. The machinery of government – in this case Vauban – finds their role in ferreting out information about these divided pieces and putting them together into a form from which the king can make an informed decision. Their visual access on the ground is translated into a form that the king can grasp, both in his hands and with his eyes in order to govern for the benefit of all. If the table homogenizes information by converting it into figures (numbers and regions) that can easily be set in relation to one another

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<sup>602</sup> See *ibid*, 47-49.

<sup>603</sup> Vauban, *The New Method of Fortification*, 67; emphasis mine.

<sup>604</sup> Cited in Keohane, 252.



(and thereby enable concrete operations and decision-making),<sup>605</sup> this homogenization is predicated upon the exposition of difference: each calculation represents a highly specific and *different* object, *divided* from the others so that it can be placed in relation to them. Hence our object can be understood as a table that prioritizes difference (for instance, through the contrasting colors used to demarcate the differences between each province), as well as a kind of (oppressively) reinforced unity.

At the center of this unity is the King, who hovers above Couplet's map as the implied recipient of the gift: the first reader of the information it presents. The table that makes everything visible is, in a sense, thus both open and furtive. For though its information is emphatically legible, the decisions that will be taken with how to act upon that information remain secret, the prerogative of the King, its first viewer. Information is provided for him to wield at his discretion. This private type of viewing makes Couplet's state table like the secret *coffre* buried in the heart of each of Vauban's fortresses,

*Un coffre bien fermé, dans le cabinet du commandant, don't il aura une clef et l'intendant l'autre; ce coffre, contenant les ordres secrets du gouvernement, pour ce qui regardera la défense de la place, et jusqu'où il désirera qu'elle soit poussée: les ordres sur la succession au commandement, en cas de mort du commandant pendant le siege, et un certain nombre de commissions et de brevets en blanc pour remplacer les officiers des corps qui viendront à manquer. [sic]*<sup>606</sup>

The documents in the safety deposit coffer predict, like a table, what may happen in the future thanks to their guarded and safely bounded location ("white sheets of letters patent" to name replacements if the designated replacements perish). They can only be operationalized, however, by the one who has access to them. This is the one on top of everyone else, the one who can look down on the entire society, the one whose elevated position allows him to in Louis' words, discover "the more remote ideas and the most hidden interests of our courtiers coming to us through conflicting interests."<sup>607</sup> The King, thus, was like the fortress-kingdom in which he resided; in private with his advisors, he could preside over a set of tables to make decisions about the social order he was entrusted to steward. This mode of viewing depended upon exposing information and then using it to build fortifications that were impenetrable from the outside. In keeping with this imperative, in 1684 (the year of Couplet's gift), Louvois installed iron bars on the interior shutters of the King's *garde-robe*, as well as locks on the doors in the Grande Galerie, "*pour empêcher que, quand S.M. sera dans lad. Galerie, ceux qui auront des passe-partout ne puissent ouvrir lesd. Portes.*"<sup>608</sup> And while the Grande Galerie, like the King's bedroom, were public spaces full of people, the space of state decision-making was the *Cabinet de Conseil*, the smallest room in Versailles' series of state apartments. It was not designed for show, but for work. Its centerpiece was a table, for the *Conseil*, as well as walls lined initially with mirrors and small objects made of precious stone.<sup>609</sup> This particular staging was ironically one of the most intimate in the palace, decorated like the cabinet of a *particulier*,

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<sup>605</sup> Joseph Vogl describes tables as "*Diagramme entwerfen ein spezifisches Feld der Sichtbarkeit, das seine Objekte nicht abbildet, sondern über konkrete Operationen hervorbringt und schließlich überschaubar macht.*" Vogl, 62-63. See also Schneider, 224.

<sup>606</sup> Vauban, *Défense des Places*, op. Cit., 79-80.

<sup>607</sup> Cited in Keohane, 246.

<sup>608</sup> Cited in Sarmant, 308.

<sup>609</sup> Castelluccio (2017), 82-83.

with small agate and precious stone carvings and vases that could have been easily stolen in more public settings. It formed a kind of pendant, as we will later see, to the curiosity cabinet. Here, however the King's work table – where he met with Louvois nearly every workday – was not a visible display of the state *as* a magnificent table, but remained locked and out of sight, fortified like the frontiers Louvois and Vauban were erecting and which we see cartographically articulated in the map on Couplet's marble mosaic.

This is also the view of absolutism that we are most familiar with: as in a fortress, the king protects himself from view through the construction of martial, if spectacular and glittering, facades while opening up and flattening the squared and bounded field around him, destroying obstacles to his visual access.<sup>610</sup> The political order takes a form analogous to that of the planar, tabular, territory bordered by “natural” frontiers, with the king on top. In terms of psychogeography, power is maintained over the open body of the table thanks to the establishment of a shield, which hides a secret: the King's will.<sup>611</sup> At the same time, as we have already stated, the object keeps this will in check because in order for will to act, it must have access to information, and this information must be gathered on the ground, converted into legible form through various layers of organized flattening (mapping, statistics, etc.). In Louvois' case, the fortresses built by Vauban were expedient as establishing a means of offensive defense, which also kept a check on costs thanks to Vauban's tabular micro-management. As if to reiterate this political ideology, the edges of Louis XIV era tables are generally hard and spiked outwards. The widely used “*bec de corbin*” moulding, for instance, was named for the shape of the halberds brandished by the French King's *gardes du corps* in the fifteenth century.<sup>612</sup> (Fig. 16) It jutted outward, projecting into a point that rhetorically says, “keep a distance.” The table's top, its *plateau* was thus exposed, but was surrounded by a border that visually demanded deference, like the sharp star-shaped walls of Vauban's fortresses built to control access in and out of France at the *ligne de fer*.<sup>613</sup>

In 1683 and 84, Louvois and Vauban's strategies seemed impossibly successful, a crescendo of military victories culminating in the conquest of Luxembourg, which was seen as a keystone in breaking down the Spanish Netherlands. The city had appeared impenetrable, but surrendered to the French efforts to incorporate it into their iron border on June 6, 1684, the centerpiece of a brief (and mostly forgotten), but intense flare up of Franco-Spanish tensions.

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<sup>610</sup> By 1793, as DeJean writes, Louis “had followed Vauban's advice so literally that he had long since transformed himself into the fortified limit of the royal pre carre, becoming himself a Vaubanian fortress. Already in his 1667 memoirs, the King admonished his son that “a prince's heart is attacked like a fortified place. His first concern must be to take control over all the outposts by which one can gain access to it.” Joan deJean, “No Man's Land: The Novel's First Geography” in *Yale French Studies*, No. 73, *Everyday Life* (1987), 177. In his memoirs (dedicated to the Dauphin), he stated further, “Peace would give me the time to fortify myself each day with financial resources, with ships, with [military] intelligence.” Cited in *ibid*, 178. On the decoration of the exteriors of fortresses, see Jean Milot, *La citadelle de Lille* (Lille, Soc. de Géographie, 1959). Vauban wrote to Louvois specifically asking for funds to decorate the new citadel on June 22, 1669, reminding his boss that “*la defense n'ira pas à quatre mille livres et de cela je suis si assuré que je me soumetts à payer le surplus, S'il y a lieu, et d'avoir encore les écrivains par-dessus le marché! Je vous supplie de vous souvenir que, la citadelle de Lille ayant été votre fille aînée dans les fortifications, il est juste que vous lui faissiez quelques prerogatives*” cited in Milot, 57. For Vauban, the walls were supposed to make an impression on the citizens of the conquered city (the citadel was inside of Lille's defensive walls); its architecture was to project French-ness in the form of style and ornamentation, as well as technical (and military) mastery.

<sup>611</sup> On the importance of state secrets, or “*Arcana Imperii*” in the Baroque period, see Koschorke et. al. 177-184.

<sup>612</sup> Cochet, 40.

<sup>613</sup> Louis XIV spent lavishly on his tables' borders, for instance, paying 900 livres to Dominico Cucci for “*les 7 bordures des tables de bronze doré qu'il a faites pour les tables qui sont venues d'Italie.*” Cited in Cochet, 39.

These exploits at the border were paired with Louvois' reformation of the French interior as well, in keeping with the idea that that which was surrounded by borders needed to protect itself not only from the outside, but also from within. The year between 1683 and 1684 witnessed the largest shift in regional *intendants* during the Sun King's reign.<sup>614</sup> At the same time, from 1682-1684 Louvois instituted what were called the *compagnies de cadets-gentillhommes casernées* in different frontier locations. These organizations were the origin of French military academies, and in the fall of 1684 he created twenty-seven regiments in the army, each assigned the name of a specific province where the regiment was to be garrisoned – just as we find the names of the French provinces emblazoned in gold upon each stone in Couplet's table map. This mapping of the army into the state was the embryo, as Thierry Sarmant has written, of the modern, territorial army. This army was then outfitted with uniforms. The epaulette is instituted and the first bayonettes (designed by Vauban) are deployed. Louvois formed the modern French soldier in a form that would last through the nineteenth century. France, thus, transitioned into a permanent state of war, which was at once military and, as Joan deJean has argued, psychological (in September French troops were 160,000 men strong).<sup>615</sup> Fortress France was fortified in order to mobilize defense as offence, and within that fortress, Louvois was occupying space not through the high sciences of cartography and astronomy (as Colbert had done), but through the mobilization of troops and military engineering, which we also find visually articulated on our table.

The science academy was, in this scenario, of limited use and interest. Louvois would call upon the sometimes if need arose, which was seldom. A case in point was the construction of the Maintenon aqueduct and the canalization of the Eure river. Since the population at Versailles had doubled in the two years since the court officially established residence there, water was needed. A lot of it.<sup>616</sup> Not only for the symbolic reasons detailed above, but because there simply was not enough to go around. He hired Philippe de la Hire (the academician who was drawing triangles with Picard, as we saw, on the Breton coast) to calculate the levelling necessary for the water flow between Pontgouin and the reservoir of the Versailles grotto. Vauban was to execute the work on the project, but Louvois was unhappy with the design the *Maréchal* proposed. He then consulted the academy in order to solicit an opinion that coincided with his own personal vision. The Academy concurred, Vauban capitulated, and a total of thirty thousand men (many recruited from the army) were sent to transport materials, quarry rock, make bricks, heat forges, dig, cart, and build in order to see the work through. Aside from serving as a "check" on different opinions, however, the Academy appeared to Louvois as serving little purpose, and he discontinued funding on the mapping project so important to Colbert.

Turning back to our table, however, we can begin to discern several characteristics that may have been intended to appeal to Louvois particularly. For one, as noted, the new map of France was *not* used. Instead, a traditional version was used in which France's size was exaggerated and in which recent conquests were added to its bulk. Moreover, each of the provinces named would correspond to Louvois plans to re-deploy the army and rename its units according to the provinces in which they were stationed. The four bands of borders reinforced the Vauban ideal of a strongly fortified and squared *pre carré*, and the entire ensemble presented pieces of stone to the King in a manner that metaphorically demonstrated his grasp on the earth itself, which he could move via canal and river to his palace. On one hand, therefore,

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<sup>614</sup> Sarmant, 70.

<sup>615</sup> deJean (1984), 3-19; Sarmant, 70.

<sup>616</sup> Mukerji (1997), 181-197.

one could understand the table in Colbertian terms and on the other in a manner more aligned with Louvois' priorities. The latter's personal tastes, indeed, dovetailed nicely with the King's; both were great fans and patrons of the battle painter Adam-Frans van der Meulen, whose works presented viewers with images of sieges in which the viewer looks out toward a besieged down in a way that embeds him/her within ground already occupied by the French.<sup>617</sup> If one of these paintings were transposed into the form of the marble table, it would be as if the miniature viewer were *inside* the field of the table, in its map, which is simultaneously the literal ground, gazing out at an iron-clad boundary that fully encircles the horizon.(Fig.17)

The whole ensemble is given a triumphant classical pedigree, as was attributed to Louis and his victories of the period in courtiers' (and official court historians') panegyrics. When Louis' armies took Ghent, the Duc de Navailles wrote, "*ce sont des choses que nous n'avions jamais vues et don't les histoires ne font aucune mention*"; Luxembourg was "*la plus belle et glorieuse conquete que le roi ait faite en sa vie*", and when the French sent forces into Casal on the Po river, a courtier exclaimed, "*Le Roi, plus grand que César, avait soumis en un même jour le Rhin et le Pô.*"<sup>618</sup> Ludovician panegyric, as Erica Harth has argued, has something in common with the graphic language of cartography.<sup>619</sup> Namely, it reduces the narrative complexities of history and aims to erase ambiguity. It creates a unified ground, one that is leveled and easy to comprehend; in Vauban's words, it is easy to hold in one's hand, like the tables in the secret coffers buried in his fortresses. Fig. 18 What I have been suggesting is that the gifted table can be understood as a rendering of the groundwork that both Colbert's academicians *and* Louvois' military engineers were undertaking. Their actions were building a new figure of France that involved the mapping and transformation of French ground into something visible as "France", at once a finely-cut figure on the Foucauldian "*tableau*" of signifiers and a material portrait of the King's magnificent state. Crucially, however, it is a portrait without a person; it is comprised instead of visual *information*. It is this information that portrays a *state* that is one in which ground (literally rock) has itself been turned into a magnificently glistening figure.

Precisely this shaping of ground was what Louvois was busy with when Couplet gave the king the marble table. At that very moment, Louvois wrote *à propos* the construction of the Canal de l'Eure to the head architect at Versailles, Hardouin-Mansart, "*Le roi me paraist avoir envie d'accommoder l'étang de Clagny, c'est-à-dire de lui faire une figure.*" (sic)<sup>620</sup> That is to say, the King wanted Louvois and his army of military engineers to transform the landscape into something visible, to give it a form that could be grasped, to turn the ground into a representation, something that was linked to its material presence, but simultaneously distinct from it. He wanted them to turn it into a homology both of himself and of the "state" being shaped in his "figure" by his engineers and scientists. In one of Mme de Scudéry's *Conversations Nouvelles*, which we will later return to, the author describes the impossibility of truly seeing the King for he is "beyond expression" and "can never be properly represented" much as "painting...has never successfully imitated...the brilliancy of the sun."<sup>621</sup> The marble table that Couplet gifted, however, managed to represent the King through the absence of his

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<sup>617</sup> On Van der Meulen and the siege painting as a genre developed under Louis XIV, see Isabelle Richefort, *Adam-François Van der Meulen: Peintre flamand au service de Louis XIV* (Brussels: Dexia, 2004) and Julie-Anne Plax, "Seventeenth-Century French Images of Warfare" in *Artful Armies, Beautiful Battles: Art and Warfare in the Early Modern Europe*, ed. Pia F. Cuneo (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 131–155.

<sup>618</sup> Cited in Sarmant, 34 and 112.

<sup>619</sup> Harth, op. cit.

<sup>620</sup> Cited in Sarmant, 311.

<sup>621</sup> Cited deJean (1987), 183-4.

human figure in favor of the presentation of the figure of his state: mapped, and magnificent thanks to the achievements of those who were shaping the earth into a new tabular form for him.

Now that we have recognized the context of the gift and also the important ways in which the table intersected with new mobilizations of “ground” (literal and epistemological), let us turn then to the special meaning of marble and marble tables, which were so dear to both Louvois and Louis. For it *mattered* that the table was made of polished stone and not, for instance, of wooden marquetry. Marble’s meaning, like that of the table, oscillated between the symbolic and the material. And the furnishing of stone for the King’s workshops required that the French landscape be remapped and rebuilt.

## Act 2

### Marble Queries

*“La France était dans une tranquillité parfaite; l’on n’y connaissait plus d’autres armes que les instruments nécessaires pour remuer les terres et pour bâtir.”* Mme de Lafayette, 1688

Writing about another 17<sup>th</sup>-century marble table (from Florence), the art historian Hannah Baader cites the Venetian author of a treatise on gems and stones named Ludovico Dolce, who observed in 1565 that “every region in the world generates other stones and gems.” (Fig. 18) Baader takes this as a point of departure to claim that collecting stones “can become a kind of mapping of the earth and a form of geography.”<sup>622</sup> Since all stones are different depending on the conditions in which they are formed, according to Dolce, collections of stones thus point to the specific places in which the stones were gathered. They act as indexes of a regional point of origin. We have seen so far how both the French academy of sciences and Louvois’ military engineers were indeed busy mapping and reshaping France in the period in which Couplet’s table was commissioned, digging up (Mme de Lafayette would write “*remuer*”, or stir up) stone and earth and then reframing it in a new *chassis*. We will now, following Baader’s impetus, inquire into how one might parse the idea of marble-as-map in the French context. On Couplet’s table, much of the marble used actually did *not* originate in France. It would seem that the stones for the table’s border bands came from along the Belgian border in Hainault (a region that was irregularly French in this period). These are Sainte-Anne (the gray/blue) and the signature red of Rance. The provinces appear to be comprised of Bleu Turquin, Jaune de Sienne (or Jaune Antique), Brèche de Vérone, and Green of Prato while the white marble of the seas and rivers comes from Carrara.<sup>623</sup> As a matter of fact, most collections of stones in France through the later 18<sup>th</sup> century were not organized by place of origin.<sup>624</sup> *Lithothèques* and *marmothèques* were organized, like collections of shells and other curiosities, primarily according to aesthetic

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<sup>622</sup> Lodovico Dolce, cited in Hannah Baader, “Livorno, Lapis Lazuli, Geology, and the Treasures of the Sea in 1604” in *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma Issue 5 (2017)*, 159.

<sup>623</sup> Email consultation with Versailles marble expert Sophie Mouquin, March 13, 2018. Further investigation would need to be done in order to securely ascertain the origins of the stones.

<sup>624</sup> On early modern collections of rock and minerals see Mouquin, “Agate, Jasper and Sardonyx: Gemstones in French Mineralogical Collections of the Eighteenth Century” in *Gold, Jasper, and Carnelian: Johann Christian Neuber at the Saxon Court*, ed. Alexis Kugel (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2012), 45-89 and Mouquin, “Entre curiosité et science : lithothèques et marmothèques sous l’Ancien Régime.” *Studiolo. Revue de l’Académie de France à Rome*, 2012. <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01671326>

categories, and not sorted into a rationalized “cartographic” order.<sup>625</sup> (Figs. 19-20) This did not mean that collectors did not necessarily know where their rocks came from, but implies that other sorting categories took precedence over geographic integrity. Nonetheless, at Versailles, marble was a matter of grand political importance, and staking a claim over its origin was a matter of French cultural ambitions. Establishing an “ideology” of *French* marble (and the political infrastructure necessary to quarry it) was a top priority to the Crown and the Superintendentants of the *bâtiments* like Colbert and Louvois for several reasons.<sup>626</sup> In this chapter I will examine these reasons, outlining both the rationale behind the French ideology of marble, as well as the physical, geographical, and social networks that this ideology engendered.

What made marble a matter of *state* for the seventeenth-century French regime? For one thing, marble came with an important Antique pedigree and the material provided not a geographical, but a symbolic link to Ancient Rome. At the same time, the establishment of an ideology of French marble aimed to demonstrate that modern France had surpassed both the ancients and the Florentines in assuming cultural dominance in the arts, including furniture-making and architecture. This implied that France had assumed the mantle of artistic sophistication *and* the infrastructural power to surpass its rivals; Colbert and Louvois’ workshops could outproduce the Italians in their own domain of *pietra dura*, while they could also outshine the Romans when it came to building the vast infrastructure it would take to haul marble to Paris from the provinces (and infrastructure only a state and no individual could mobilize). Concurrently, as we will see, marble’s association with the divine presented a further argument about the nature of the French King, since the stone operated (as we have seen) in an anagogical<sup>627</sup> fashion to his person. Procuring stone for the crown and staking a claim for its “Frenchness” did matter, but its configuration into tables and architecture was not quite cartographic in a sense we would associate with the rationale of modern cartography. Instead, it operated seamlessly on levels that oscillated between the symbolic, the geographical, and the historical.

In recent years, French historians and art historians like Sophie Mouquin, Pascal Julien, and Geneviève Bresc-Bautier have published major studies on the politics of French marble in the early modern period.<sup>628</sup> This chapter follows their lead in unearthing why marble was important enough to the seventeenth-century monarchy to necessitate vast expenditures and an investment in reshaping the landscape so that blocks of stone could be dragged, carted, and shipped from France’s borders to the Court at Versailles, where ancient precedents and a medieval fascination for the material were reinterpreted to suit the purposes of the ascending Bourbon state. At the same time, it seeks to expand the analytical frame these scholars have

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<sup>625</sup> It was in the last third of the 18<sup>th</sup> century that new kinds of receptacles and furnishings emerged that sorted stones by number and geographic labels. Equipped with a catalogue listing information about the stones, the “Enlightened” collector could arrange and sort them according to varying criteria. Compare this, however, with images by Boucher, for instance, for a sale at Gersaint from 1733 where stones and naturalia have piled up on a surface awash with a mixture of dilluvian commodities washed ashore. See Mouquin “Entre curiosité et science...” (2012), 79.

<sup>626</sup> I have drawn the term ideology from the French historian of marble Sophie Mouquin.

<sup>627</sup> The *anagogical* is a mode of interpretation that is deployed for scriptural exegesis to detect allusions to the afterlife.

<sup>628</sup> See especially Sophie Mouquin, *Versailles en ses marbres* (Paris: Arthena, 2018), Pascal Julien, *Marbres de carrières en palais* (Marseille; Le Bec en l’air, 2006) Geneviève Bresc-Bautier, “L’importance du marbre de Carrare à la cour de Louis XIV: rivalités des marchands et échecs des compagnies”, in *Marbres de rois*, Pascal Julien ed. (Aix-en-Provence: Presses Universitaires de Provence, 2013), 123-150. And Bresc-Bautier & Hélène du Mesnil, “Le Marbre du Roi: l’approvisionnement en marbre des Bâtiments du roi, 1660-1715” in *Eighteenth Century Life*, vol. 17, n.2 May (1993), 36-54.

established by considering how marble and mapping were imbricated in the gradual production of a type of statehood defined as much by resources as by the figure of the King. The table, which is this chapter's object of investigation, provides a rich fulcrum for this line of inquiry since it is both a physical embodiment of the King's majesty and a map of his realm. In the previous section of this chapter, we considered the ways in which a multitude of agents provided a context for crafting a table for the Sun King. Here, we will begin to locate even more agents essential to the production of such an object. In order to do so, we must think about the symbolic cachet of the stone, as well all of the feet and hands that brought marble from the lofty peaks of the Pyrenees and the valleys of Hainault, via streams filled with freezing melted snow on pine rafts to ports around France, from which the blocks of stone made their way to the Quai de la Conférence in Paris and from there into the King's marble storage depots.

### *Stories in Stone*

Since Antiquity, though not considered a precious stone, marble was nonetheless thought to be imbued with mystical and magical properties. Both Aristotle and Theophrastus had developed theories of marble and other fine stones which held that they consisted of earthly matter suspended in water that had descended into the center of the earth, where they either froze, or were burned.<sup>629</sup> The hardness of stone was, therefore, understood to be the result of a process of elemental liquification, and one of constant growth.<sup>630</sup> As Fabio Barry and others have noted, these traditions of linking semi-precious stone and water continued to hold currency well into the early modern period. In the case of marble specifically, an etymological association between “*Mar*” and “*Marmor*” (or “Marble”) descended from the Greek “*mairein*” which meant “to glisten” and was associated both with sparkle and movement. Homer’s “shimmering sea,” like Virgil’s Mediterranean, was a marble surface, pierced as the Roman poet wrote, by “the laboring oar.” This, following Barry, had rendered the material symbolically and visually essential for the floors in major religious structures like the Hagia Sophia, from which marble floors and ecclesiastical ornament sailed west to Italy and churches like San Marco (13<sup>th</sup> century) in Venice.<sup>631</sup> The stone floor connoted both earthly and divine travel.<sup>632</sup> The textual passage from the sixth book of Virgil’s *Aeneid* cited on Couplet’s table (*Hae Tibi Erunt Artes*<sup>633</sup>), took up this interlinked theme of marble stone and voyaging. In the episode, the peripatetic Aeneas travels to the shores of Cumae, still seeking to found a stable home after fleeing the flames of Troy.<sup>634</sup> Arriving at the rocky coast, his maritime companions hop onto the shore and seek to exploit the natural resources they discover: rocks (flint), water, and woods (for fire and food). Ever

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<sup>629</sup> Fabio Barry, “Walking on Water: Cosmic Floors in Antiquity and the Middle Ages” in *The Art Bulletin*, Dec., 2007, Vol. 89, No. 4 (Dec., 2007), 627-656 and Wolfram Koeppe, “Mysterious and Prized: Hardstones in Human History before the Renaissance” in *Art of the Royal Court: Treasures in Pietre Dure from the Palaces of Europe*, Wolfram Koeppe ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press and New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2008), 2-11, and Rolf Schneider, “Coloured marble. The splendour and power of imperial Rome” in *Apollo: the international magazine of the arts*, Nr. July (2001), 3-10, Mark Bradley, “Colour and Marble in Early Imperial Rome” in *The Cambridge Classical Journal* Vol. 52 (2006), 1-22.

<sup>630</sup> Thus, in his *On the Congelation and Conglutination of Stones* (1021-23), the Arab physician Avicenna (980-1037) deduced from observation of alluvial formations (conglutination) and the growth of stalactites (congelation) that there must exist a lapidifying, “mineral force” that freezes water. Barry, 35.

<sup>631</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>632</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>633</sup> [sic]

<sup>634</sup> Cumae was the first ancient Greek colony in Italy.

obedient, Aeneas ignores these efforts to satisfy base human desire and seeks out the heights above the cliffs where Apollo sat enthroned. Somewhere within this rocky shore was the abode of the Cumaen Sibyl who resided in a hidden cavern from which her voice gushed forth through hundreds of “wide mouths,” or holes in the rock face, as if the earth were speaking from within and exhorting Aeneas to continue his journey. We come to quickly associate a mythology of maritime crossing from Troy here with speaking stones that drive the timid hero toward the light of Phoebus. “I ask no realm unpledged by my fate,” proclaims Aeneas to the Sibyl, “that the Teucrians may rest in Latium... Then to Phoebus and Trivia I will set up a temple of solid marble, and festal days in Phoebus’ name.”<sup>635</sup> Having crossed the glistening “*marein*” Aeneas promises to build his new Roman (Latium) state upon the solid foundation of marble, in deference to the shimmering Sun God.

Indeed, marble did become one of the most characteristic and enduring materials of classical Rome. It’s hardness and gleam, when polished, made it an ideal material to build for the ages. The Romans started building in marble at a relatively late date, not before the early first century BC.<sup>636</sup> In Republican Rome, it still served mostly in domestic villas as pavement and columns, though it could also be found in the public centers of Roman cities.<sup>637</sup> Under Augustus, however, marble starts to be imported to Rome in unprecedented quantity. Polychrome marble especially, dragged and shipped from the limits of the Empire, was especially popular: Rome’s Imperial expanse manifested itself in the heart of Augustus’ city through the deployment of hewn stone. Stone became a symbol, as Ralph Schneider writes, for the cultural supremacy of Roman identity.<sup>638</sup> In his *Natural History* Pliny bemoaned the deployment of marble as an instrument of state-building:

For everything that we have invested up to the present volume may be deemed to have been created for the benefit of mankind. Mountains, however, were made by nature for herself to serve as a kind of framework for holding firmly together the inner parts of the earth, and at the same time to enable her to subdue the violence of rivers, to break the force of heavy seas and so to curb with her most restless elements the hardest material of which she is made. We smash these mountains and haul them away for no other reason than that our pleasure dictates it; and yet there was a time when it seemed remarkable even to have succeeded in crossing them... Headlands are laid open to the sea, and nature is flattened. We remove the barriers created to serve as the boundaries of nations, and ships are built especially for marble...<sup>639</sup>

Centuries later, what Pliny bemoaned caught the imagination of Colbert, Louvois, and Louis XIV, each of who eagerly appropriated the Roman obsession with moving stone as a point of reference—and springboard—for modern action on a grand scale. Moreover, it was not difficult to marry the Antique deployment of stone as a means of spatially marking power with

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<sup>635</sup> Virgil, *The Aeneid Book VI*, <https://www.theoi.com/Text/VirgilAeneid6.html>.

<sup>636</sup> See Schneider.

<sup>637</sup> Ibid.

<sup>638</sup> Consolidating all of the stone takes a lot of effort- like in Numidia, where camps were built to quarry the stone and work it before shipping it to the center via roads, bridges, vehicles, animals- sea power key- building power. Ibid, 4.

<sup>639</sup> Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* (§ 36.1.2), cited in Eric Scigliano, *Michelangelo’s Mountain: The Quest for Perfection in the Marble Quarries of Carrara* (New York: Free Press, 2005), 69.



Christian overtones. Biblical texts associated the heavenly Jerusalem with marble and semi-precious stones. In Revelation 21: 18-20, the Holy City is described as follows:

And the building of the wall of it was of jasper, and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.<sup>640</sup>

The twelve stones were like the twelve apostles, with the foundational walls being made of jasper, a stone deeply associated with marble. These Christian implications dovetailed neatly with ancient ideas in the work of Theophrastus and Statius who wondered at the capacity of marble and jasper, to grow like vegetation.<sup>641</sup> Similar to faith, mines of marble could never be depleted and were therefore an apt material foundation for God's worship.<sup>642</sup> Marble's shimmer and its painterly veins seemed to make the Lord and his work as creator manifest on earth. For Pliny, marble was *Natura Pictrix*. For Christians, it could appear as a direct outgrowth of the *Deus Artifex*.<sup>643</sup> The apparent inner luminosity of polished marble associated it with divine *éclat* and a metaphysics of light so important in the medieval period: the Lord was *in* the stone, in the form of chromatic shine (as for Isidor of Seville, who described beauty in terms of light, shine, and color).<sup>644</sup> For the *Rex Christianissimus*, each of these characteristics was a highly desirable association: divine light, growth, faith, magnificence, as were Antique associations with empire and military/technological might. "These are your arts", Couplet had said, following Virgil.

These associations were not simply platitudes. The seventeenth century was still highly invested in this symbolism. In 1635, Étienne Molinier, for example, penned a tract about the city of God and its twelve "foundations", in which he explained the symbolic language of rocks and their relation to the church: Jasper was Faith and Peter, while agate stood for Philip and Solitude.<sup>645</sup> Christian interpretations of marble and jasper, however, conjoined in the early modern era with the well-known fascination about rock on the part of collectors of curiosities, humanists, and natural philosophers like Ludovico Dolce or Ulisse Aldrovandi who was reputedly the first scholar to refer to the study of stones as "geology".<sup>646</sup> Aldrovandini's correspondence is full of observations about stones and where they came from (Saxony, Egypt, Naples, and more).<sup>647</sup> The budding interest in geology as it relates to geography, however, did

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<sup>640</sup> Mouquin, "Agate, Jasper and Sardonyx..." (2012), 49.

<sup>641</sup> Theophrastus, on stones, ""but the greatest and most wonderful power, if this is true, is that of stones which give birth to young" cited Ibid, 49.

<sup>642</sup> See Mouquin, "Pour Dieu et pour le Roi : l'élaboration d'une symbolique du marbre sous l'Ancien Régime" in *Marbres jaspés de Saint-Rémy et de la région de Rochefort* (Namur: Musée des Arts anciens du Namurois, 2012), 205-231.

<sup>643</sup> Ibid, 208. On marble and artistic creativity in the Renaissance, see Beate Fricke, "At the Threshold of Painting: The man of Sorrows by Albrecht Dürer" in *Renaissance metapainting*, Péter Bokody and Alexander Nagel, eds. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), 209-238. See also Roger Caillois, *The Writing of Stones*, trans. Barbara Bray (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1985).

<sup>644</sup> Mouquin, "Pour Dieu et pour le Roi" (2012), 208.

<sup>645</sup> Mouquin, "Agate, Jasper and Sardonyx..." (2012), 50.

<sup>646</sup> Baader, 152.

<sup>647</sup> Ibid. Importantly, it would have been impossible to gain an overview of Aldrovandini's collection as a "map" visible at one glance. As he described it, "in my microcosm, you can see more than 18,000 different things, among

not mitigate a fascination on the part of humanists in the pictorial and mystical aspects of stone. In his book on the subterranean world (*Mundus Subterraneus*, 1665), the naturalist Athanasius Kircher, for example, argued that images in stones are evidence of *eikonogenesis*, or “image-birthing”, and, as such, an example of the divine creative powers of nature. These, he suggested, were keys to the Divine Mind, “immutable calculations close to the Divine archetype unified by the laws of nature.”<sup>648</sup> Stone, thus, oscillated in the contemporary imagination of scholars between a fascination with creative, generative processes linked to the divine and a growing interest in geography and physical science.<sup>649</sup> Our focus here, however, is less in the well-documented variety of seventeenth-century theories of stone and its origins as in the fact that each of these qualities made semi-precious stones and marble a desirable commodity for royal courts both north and south of the alps.<sup>650</sup> This, in turn, brings us back to the theme of fragmentation and control we identified as a driving force in the aesthetics of Couplet’s table.

One of the particularities of stone was that in order for it to flaunt the qualities that were thought to inhere in it, the rock needed to be worked and polished.<sup>651</sup> Rudolf II’s lapidary specialist Anselme Boèce de Bodt (b. 1550), for instance, observed in his 1644 treatise *The Perfect Jeweler* (1644) that marble is a “stone that is extremely hard and which shines (*éclat*) & is resplendent (*résplendit*) marvelously when one polishes it.” It is the process of working the material that brings out qualities that are embedded within it, but invisible without the control and mastery of artistry and technology. Stone needs to be handled in order to become legible as what it already is. In a sense, this is what made it desirable as a royal collectible. Not unlike lathing and turning, which proved a monarch’s personal mastery of craft, the collecting and polishing of stones demonstrated a degree of control over land and the ability to cultivate and extract excellence from it.<sup>652</sup> The king with control over stone is one who is not only an offshoot of the divine creator, but also a caretaker of the land from which the stone comes. He makes the most of the Lord’s creation by cultivating that which is innate in the earth through the gifts that the Lord has also endowed in him, as ruler, or *superanus*.<sup>653</sup> Unlike lathing and turning, however,

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which 7000 in fifteen volumes, dried and pasted, 3000 of which I had painted as if alive. The rest- animals terrestrial, aerial and aquatic, and other subterranean things such as earths, petrified sap, stones, marbles, rocks, and metals – amount to as many pieces again. . . . These can be seen in fourteen cupboards, which I call the Pinacotheca. I also have sixty-six armoires, divided into 4500 pigeonholes, where there are 7000 things from beneath the earth, together with various fruits, gums, and other very beautiful things from the Indies, marked with their names, so that they can be found.” Cited in Claudia Swan, “From Blowfish to Flower Still Life Paintings” in *Classification and Its Images, circa 1600* in *Merchants & Marvels: Commerce, Science, and Art in Early Modern Europe*, Pamela H. Smith and Paula Findlen, eds. (London: Routledge, 2002), 110.

<sup>648</sup> Fabio Barry, “Painting in Stone”: Early Modern Experiments in a Metamedium” in *The Art Bulletin* 99(3) July (2017), 51.

<sup>649</sup> To get a glimpse of how a mid-17<sup>th</sup>-century French collection including stones and minerals would have been constituted, see Claude du Molinet, *Le Cabinet de la Bibliotheque de Sainte Genevieve divisé en deux parties* (Paris: Antoine Dezallier, 1692), 218-224.

<sup>650</sup> On the history and histories of the theory of geology in France, see Rhoda Rappoport, *When Geologists were Historians 1660-1750* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

<sup>651</sup> In Dezallier D’Argenville’s *L’Histoire naturelle, éclaircie dans deux de ses parties principales, La Lithologie et la Conchyliologie* (Paris, 1742), the author describes using cloths, or wax and various handling substances that can be used to “aider la nature, & la faire paroître dans tout son éclat.” See Daniela Bleichmar, “Learning to Look: Visual Expertise Across Art and Science in Eighteenth-Century France” in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* Vol. 46, No. 1 (Fall 2012), 94.

<sup>652</sup> Helmut Puff, *Miniature Monuments: Modeling German History* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 84.

<sup>653</sup> *Ibid.*

the working of marble entailed the development of a large and complex organization of skilled labor dispersed over a large extent space, i.e. across the entire kingdom and beyond.

But first let us consider the development of setting a *politique du marbre* into place. The origins of marble development in France are ancient but remain somewhat opaque in terms of historical record. The Romans certainly were quarrying stone in the South, primarily in the Pyrenees and Languedoc already in the second and third centuries, by which time they were extracting green *cippolino mandolato* from Campan, remains of which can be found for example in Lyon where the stone supplied columns for a temple.<sup>654</sup> (Figs. 21-22) At Aubert, in the central Pyrenees, the black and white limestone breccia known as *mamor celticum* also enjoyed widespread popularity in Antiquity and was shipped as far off as Constantinople by the fourth century.<sup>655</sup> (Fig. 23) The marbles of Belgium were also being quarried; direct connections between developing the marble potential buried in French ground and Antiquity were perhaps vague, but certainly present. (Figs.24-25) Pyrenean, Belgian, and Languedocian marbles continued to be used throughout the medieval period as well, often for ecclesiastical architecture. In the sixteenth century, the Valois kings of France began to set their sights on it with renewed interest.<sup>656</sup> During the second half of that century, the deployment of marbles expanded from religious contexts into secular usage on the part of French elites.<sup>657</sup> Henri II announced his desire to requisition marble from France's southern regions, appointing the protestant engineer and architect Dominique Bertin in 1554 as "*conducteur du marbre pour le roy*" to cull French marbles for his "*chateau de Saint-Germain en Laye*" to replace the marbles that "*on porte à grand coût de Gênes.*"<sup>658</sup>

Under François II, a tax was implemented in 1560 on "*toutes les mines et autres substances terrestres qui se tirent dans le royaume*" including marble, jasper, and porphyry. Yet in a deeply divided France – especially in the mountainous and still feudal Pyrenees – this attempt to centralize control over ground resources remained difficult, if not impossible, to impose. Instead, individuals like Bertin, outfitted with letters patent from the King, scouted marble supplied the Crown but also *particuliers* and the church on a centrally sponsored, but relatively atomized basis.<sup>659</sup> As an entrepreneur, Bertin would be commissioned by the crown's architect, Pierre Lescot, to provide marble (for the large sum of 2,233 livres) for the court, but the commission did not specify that the stones needed to come from France. The marble trade was thus *pêle-mêle* in terms of where marble was procured and the supply of marble was parceled out to individuals who built their own private business networks. For the monarchy, it was more clearly still more important to display spectacular variety as a marker of royal status than to link the display of marble magnificence to a specifically French geography.<sup>660</sup> Purchases for the Louvre construction projects of this era thus were made in large part in Flanders and Italy, as well as the Midi-Pyrénées. Marble was even imported from Portugal, where the King placed an order with a Frenchman who was extracting and polishing stone in Iberia.<sup>661</sup> Stone in this context served not so much a cartographic function as a representational one; it was intended to

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<sup>654</sup> Julien (2006), 80.

<sup>655</sup> Ibid.

<sup>656</sup> Ibid, 73-80.

<sup>657</sup> Ibid, 81-90.

<sup>658</sup> Henri II cited in Ibid, 81.

<sup>659</sup> For instance the façade of the Hotel de Molinier-Catellan in Toulouse, Ibid.

<sup>660</sup> Ibid, 81.

<sup>661</sup> Ibid.

embody the ruler's magnificence (his *status*) and not a particular attachment to a defined *state* geography, just as it was carried out by individuals like Bertin, rather than a *state* infrastructure.

Henry IV, perhaps in the interest of solidifying his reign symbolically, manifested a distinct interest in finding sources of marble in the Pyrenees to supplement the marbles closer to the north in Hainault. He requisitioned marble columns from a church in Bielle, in the valley of Ossau for his personal use, for instance, as well as pedestals and corniches from a fountain stored in Toulouse in 1597. These requisitions complemented other stones for his building projects that, in his words, "were strewn along the Garonne river from Saint-Béat to Toulouse, and which belong to me."<sup>662</sup> He directed his *connétable* Montmorency to continue the search for *beaux marbres* that would be easy to ship to Paris for the embellishment of "my houses of the Tuileries, Saint-Germain-en-Laye and Fontainebleau," in "his" provinces Languedoc, Provence, and Dauphiné, directing Montmorency to assist the King's envoys in scouting and shipping the marble back to the capital.<sup>663</sup> These efforts helped to open up a series of important quarries for further exploitation around France's southern edges, including quarries at Sarrancolin, Campan, and Saint-Béat (France's only source of white marble).<sup>664</sup> While the marble business continued grow throughout the first half of the seventeenth-century, under Louis XIII the development of France's stone resources took a back seat to the dramas of the Thirty Years War.<sup>665</sup>

Interestingly, it was not so much the French during the early Bourbon monarchy took the lead in exploiting France's southern marble resources, but Italians. Numerous Italian *marbriers* and sculptors settled in the French south, spearheading a lively export business of Pyrenean and Languedocian marbles to the Italian peninsula with the financial wherewithal of the Genovese (some of which landed in St. Peter's in Rome). They spawned generations of workers settled in the region. Ironically, if Henri II had been looking to save money on imports of Carrara from Genoa, the quarrying of Pyrenean marble under his rule continued at first to funnel both marble and money towards the Italian states.

As French interests in culling marble from the edges of the kingdom grew, however, these Italian marble workers became increasingly integrated into the French market, bringing their expertise to the scouting, tracing, culling, sanding, shaping, and polishing of French ground for French use. Eventually French *marbriers* like Jean Baux began establish themselves as well in Languedoc in particular, where marble was more accessible for the growing French market than the more remote Pyrenean quarries.<sup>666</sup> The marble trade was thus expanding around France's border regions, bringing in foreigners to exploit French resources. And although the efforts were supported by the crown, there was by no means a robust infrastructure at this point in place to support hauling rock from one end of the kingdom to another. Business was conducted by entrepreneurs and individual marble workers, with the backing of independent bankers, and was frequently interrupted by either civil (in the 16<sup>th</sup> century) or international conflicts (in the 17<sup>th</sup> century) playing themselves out in the border regions.

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<sup>662</sup> Cited in Julien, 83.

<sup>663</sup> In 1603, Henry granted Claude Picot from Bayonne the title of *marbrier du roi* and the privilege to extract "toutes sortes de marbres, pierres, jaspes et autres pierres et terres propres pour le service du roy" across the Pyrenees and tried to establish marble workers as a guild in Paris though these efforts would be cancelled upon his assassination in 1610. Julien, 86.

<sup>664</sup> See Mouquin (2018) on St Béat and other Pyrenean marbles, 62-66.

<sup>665</sup> Amerliorations nonetheless were undertaken, like the installation of a mill to saw marble in Saint-Béat in 1628. Julien, 86.

<sup>666</sup> On Jean Baux and Caunes-en Minervois in 1658, see Julien, 88-89.

### Con-solidating Power

All of this would begin to change in the 1660s and especially the 1670s with the construction of Versailles. Colbert and Louis' visions of building splendidly and on a scale intended to surpass Rome necessitated the transfer of stone from around the Kingdom's edges on an unprecedented level. It was then that a true ideology of French marble developed, even if the attendant infrastructure was slow to take shape. In terms of the qualities shared by states and tables that we enumerated earlier, mid-17<sup>th</sup>-century was not in an ideal state: the war with Spain was ongoing, the Fronde publicly announced political fracture (threatening the monarchy), both of which disrupted both royal building projects and the supply of marble. In the Pyrenees, violent earthquakes at Comminges and Bigorre in 1660 laid not only buildings low, but also destroyed marble quarries, disrupting the supply of stone even further.<sup>667</sup> Colbert's appointment as *surintendant* at the *Bâtiments* (1664), however, triggered a reinvigoration of construction in an effort to publicly mark the solidity and unity of the Bourbon state through the production of architecture, furniture, and material goods (as previously discusses). At this point, the marbles most in use were in fact many of the marbles found in Couplet's table: black from Dinant (Flanders), red from Rance (Hainault), as well as white Carrara and Portor, Turquin, Vert de Mer, Violet Breccia, Sienna Yellow, and Sicilian Jasper, all of which came from Italy (and all of which were expensive). In keeping with his mercantilist strategy, Colbert decided to explore and further exploit French ground to supply royal building projects. He had samples (*échantillons*) sent up from the Pyrenees and Provence, while also inspecting the possibilities of quarries that had been opened in the sixteenth century in the Jura (a red and yellow brocatelle), and at Laval in the Maine for red and black stone, or black at Sablé as well. In 1669, he had a marbrier "*fouiller*" (dig around) for possibilities in the Bourbonnais, and sent more agents to prospect in Picardie.<sup>668</sup> While the academicians were mapping France by turning space into triangle puzzle pieces to be dropped into a mathematical frame, Colbert's marble infrastructure was also spreading across French territory, sending bits and pieces back to the *bâtiments* for approval and, ultimately, for construction. The quarries were punctual, points and holes on the ground, but the network connecting them to court was tightening.

This was part of a larger mobilization on the part of Louis XIV and Colbert of a rhetoric of stewardship to seize control of France's natural resources. It had begun earlier on in Louis' reign when Colbert had sent out map-makers and inspectors for the Great Forestry Survey of 1669-1671 to the Pyrenees in order to take stock of France's timber resources.<sup>669</sup> Together, inspectors (led by the intrepid bureaucrat Louis de Froidour) and map-makers (*arpenteurs*, map-makers working with measuring chains laid directly out in fields, rather than academic cartographers and astronomers) trekked to the far-flung mountain villages of the Midi-Pyrenees and inventoried trees. The objective in that case was not to cast a "rational" grid over the Pyrenean peasantry, but rather to wrest control over resources from the local nobility.<sup>670</sup> This worked, as historian Chandra Mukerji has convincingly shown, because the monarchy made an argument—one "proved" by the inventory process—that local landowners had failed to care for their trees. The crown's agents (the inspectors) and courts (forests and rivers were run by the so-called *tables de marbre*, fittingly for this chapter) would ensure, thanks to the maps they had

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<sup>667</sup> Julien, 91.

<sup>668</sup> Ibid.

<sup>669</sup> See Mukerji (2007).

<sup>670</sup> Ibid.

collected, that trees were being well cared for and felled for the benefit of Colbert's mercantile ambitions. The trees needed to be tended to and cultivated so that they could be transformed through human technological prowess into instruments of wealth accumulation (sailing ships), which would benefit the polity as a whole. Individualistic neglect – or self-serving timber sales – would lead to collective damage. This “proof” legitimated the crown's claim that he would be better able to act as a productive steward (*mésnager*) for France's interests than local landowners.

Such inventorying proof also exceeded the trees. Stones too needed to be stewarded in their own manner. Their value was indeed more symbolic, but (or, perhaps precisely because of this metaphoric power) they could broadcast the glory of the French state, if only this symbolism could be harnessed. As Colbert reminded his King in 1665: “*Au défaut des actions éclatantes de la guerre, rien ne marque davantage la grandeur et l'esprit des princes que les bastiments; et toute la posterité les mesure à l'une de ces superbes maisons qu'ils ont élevées pendant leur vie.*”<sup>671</sup> To have his innately great stature remembered, the King must build, and he must do so with a material that could encompass the magnificence of his state of majesty, as well as the magnificence of his (territorial) state. The stature of both crown and state, thus, could and should be consolidated in the building material itself. Marble could do just that. The stone connected the palace to the regions under the King's control, he had moved their earth to him, with a claim to be rendering that earth better, more abundant, and more productive, just as Louis had done with the pine trees of the Midi-Pyrenees. Instead of the *éclat* of war, one would have the *éclat* of stone. In 1648, Jean Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin noted further on the subject of stewarding stone in *La vérité des Fables ou l'histoire des Dieux de l'antiquité* that:

*Il faut chercher ce qu'il y a de plus riche dans la Nature & lui donner la perfection par le secours de l'art. L'or, l'argent, les marbres & les pierres précieuses ne sont pas des choses guère plus précieuses que la terre même, si l'art ne les polit, & ne leur donne l'éclat et le lustre, & l'homme même qui est chef d'oeuvre de la nature, ne diffère guère des bêtes s'il ne se polit pas par le travail & par l'étude.*<sup>672</sup>

Through the requisition of stones, under the rhetoric of stewardship, the King could both extend his control over French lands and make it visible (legitimized) by his requisition and polishing of stones such as marble – it was not entirely coincidental or impractical that stone from the Pyrenees came from the same locations as timber used for shipbuilding. Placed on display in his palace, these stones referred more to this control than they did to the interests of naturalists like Aldrovandini in *lusus naturae* and exotic, far-flung places. Louis XIV's arts—the Virgilian arts of governance—would reveal themselves in the deployment of polished marble in his palaces, a material that made his grandeur, his artistry, his divinity, and his control of the land manifest.

I detail these developments in order to highlight: first, that the opening of marble quarries and the development of marble networks can (and must) be seen in relation to the mapping of state interests into and onto French ground. The emergence of France as a “*figure*” from the earth was tied to an increased interest in digging around and unearthing rocks in the service of statecraft. Such digging was part of a mapping project that ran parallel to the work of military engineers along France's borders, as well as Colbert's scientists at the *Observatoire* and surveyors (like Froidour) who were taking stock of France's natural resources through

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<sup>671</sup> Cited in Sarmant, 304.

<sup>672</sup> Cited in Mouquin, “Pour dieu et le roi” (2012), 167.

*arpentage*. Secondly, these developments make clear that the notion of collaboration in French absolutist state building project relied upon *all* of the actants (people, objects, stones, rivers, animals: agents writ large) whose labor and material presence impacted the construction of the object we are examining. It may seem far flung to connect *charretiers* (cart drivers) in the Pyrenees and longshoremen in Bordeaux to our table of less than a meter wide and just over a meter long. That is why most accounts of the table concentrate on the emergence of Louis XIV *style*. What happens, though, when we concentrate on the political and material symbolism of our object alongside the rhetoric of cartographic language through which such symbolism developed? From this perspective each dispersed node in the growing network of marble quarries takes on a particular importance. Each node, in other words, inheres in the object, coming together as a kind of declaration of the state as unified and well-governed. These networks were what the table placed under the eye of the monarch, who aimed with Colbert and later Louvois to deploy marble as an image of royal splendor, as well as political *unity* and *stability*. The object thereby offered the King a ground that cohered into the form of his kingdom; the network became an aesthetic.

### *A Socio-Geographical Mosaic*

Let us consider, then, how Colbert's networks of marble provisioning functioned. As had been done under Henry IV and Louis XIII, Colbert still deployed individual private agents to gather and ship marble to Versailles and Paris. Private bankers funded the enterprise themselves, serving as entrepreneurs who laid out the cash for the operation before being remunerated by the *bâtiments*. Instead of instituting a singular state-funded enterprise, Colbert orchestrated rivalries between entrepreneurs in order to keep prices down for the crown, and theoretically to improve quality, while also farming out responsibility and initial costs. The example of the Carrara marble trade and the banker Pierre Formont who, under Colbert, built a large commercial empire that included lucrative business in marbles (French and Italian) is instructive in showing us how this practice functioned and who the stake-holders were.

France's only source of white marble was in the Pyrenean village of Saint-Béat. The marble was hard to quarry because the best veins were deeply embedded high up in the mountain, which meant the marble needed to be blown out of the hillside with gun powder, destroying large quantities in the process; it was also difficult to find large blocks free of deficiencies; nearby Sost also had white marble, but it was too hard to work skillfully.<sup>673</sup> The French whites also lacked the luster of Carrara, which meant that the Italian trade would remain essential for French sculptors and *marbriers* throughout the *ancien régime* despite the consistent attempts to mine the Saint-Béat quarries.<sup>674</sup> In the early 1660s, before his disgrace, the *Surintendant des Finances* Nicolas Fouquet (b. 1615) had set up a team to procure marble from Carrara for the King, at a profit for Fouquet himself. The team included a financier and sculptor, Pierre Puget. Colbert himself subsequently set up a rival group, through the Toulonnais banker Jacques Beuf, who was to foot the bill, and his commissioner, a certain François Delamer. When Fouquet was disgraced, Colbert's group poached Puget and took over furnishing white marble

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<sup>673</sup> Mouquin (2018) 63. In 1758 the *contrôleur général des marbres du roi* Pierre de Lassus noted, "Je conclus de tout cela que le marbre de saint-béat ne peut être employé qu'à des gradins, carrelages, pedestaux et autres accompagnements de la figure..." cited in Mouquin (2018), 64.

<sup>674</sup> Félibien wrote, "Des autres carrières qui sont aumême lieu, l'on en tire du marbre blanc qui approche de celui de Gênes." Ibid, 63.

for resurgent royal building projects, which deployed Carrara frequently (e.g. the commission Colbert worked on from Anne of Austria to monumentalize the church at Val-de-Grâce in thanks for the miraculous birth of her son).

The enterprise of moving stone from Italy to France, however, was fraught in numerous ways. It entailed a complex series of negotiations, of both physical and political nature, between numerous parties. On the Italian side, there were the tracers and cutters of marble at the quarry, known as *tenenti* or *capitani*.<sup>675</sup> They would cull the blocks from the mountain in consultation with the French sculptor, who would participate in the selection. The *tenenti* then put their imprint on the block before a group of *lizzatori* would slide the stone on sleds precariously down the mountain.<sup>676</sup> In order to facilitate the selection process, however, the sculptor and the financier had to lubricate the administration of the quarry, headed for the Genoese by the Duke Cybo, Seigneur de Massa, and his agents. For these purposes, the marble traders relied on the diplomatic agility of the French envoy to Genoa, the Marquis Giustiniani, or the envoy to Florence since the Medici also controlled a part of the Carrara quarries.<sup>677</sup> The French entrepreneurs (Beuf, for instance) would work with this network (via a home base in France, with transfer points for goods and money at Toulon or Marseilles). The sculptor and commissioner (Puget and Delamer, in Boef's case) would supervise *in situ* and have the stone sent from Carrara by boat to Genoa, where it would be moved to larger vessels and sail to Le Havre, sometimes stopping at French Mediterranean ports along the way. At Le Havre, the stone would be moved once again to new, more shallow ships and shipped to Rouen, before being transferred yet again to even smaller sloops on which it would sail up the Seine to Paris before being unpacked on the *quais* around the Louvre.

Each step of the journey produced both costs and entailed risks. In 1661, for example, a block intended for the Val-de-Grâce commission had tumbled down the mountain killing two merchants while the autumnal rains had flooded and blocked the roads, halting progress. In 1662, a boat loaded with marble for the King sailing from Genoa was captured by pirates, in spite of a naval escort. Fifteen precious blocks were lost and they had not been insured, resulting in a huge financial and material loss.<sup>678</sup> Since war and the elements both posed constant threats to gathering heavy stones that needed to cross multiple jurisdictions and boundaries, problems of this sort were numerous. By 1664, when he took charge of the *bâtiments*, Colbert was looking to diversify his suppliers to cut costs and banked on the fact that if more people were scouting stone, marble might arrive more plentifully. He turned to a new financier from Normandy, Pierre Formont whose commercial and financial network was more powerful. The protestant Formont was well connected throughout northern Europe, with a brother in Rouen (where the marble ships transferred their goods on the Seine), two others in Gdansk, a brother-in-law in Hamburg, and a son working for the Elector of Brandenburg.<sup>679</sup> Formont already supplied the monarchy with lead, tin, and iron from Sweden, as well as copper from North Africa. He collected paintings, including the *Triumph of Amphitrite* by Poussin. He purchased books for the royal library, tulips from Holland for the royal gardens, orange trees from Saint-Domingue, donkeys

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<sup>675</sup> Bresc-Bautier (2013), 123.

<sup>676</sup> Ibid.

<sup>677</sup> Ibid.

<sup>678</sup> Ibid.

<sup>679</sup> Ibid, see also Mouquin (2018), 84-85 and Julien (2006), 91-93.



from England, horses from Barbary, and shifted large sums of money around Europe.<sup>680</sup> Marble was a profitable addition to his portfolio.

Colbert contracted Formont to deliver marble officially starting in 1664, setting him up as a rival to Beuf in Genoa, where the banker was represented by his agent Antoine André. Simultaneously, Colbert outfitted Formont with letters patent signed by the King according him “*la permission de faire fouiller seul et à l’exclusion de tous autres dans les montagnes des Pyrénées, pour en tirer les marbres pendant cinquante ans à charge d’en faire voiturer à Paris jusqu’au port de l’Esole, pour employer dans les bastimens de Sa Majesté.*” (sic)<sup>681</sup> Exclusivity did not make Formont popular; at Saint-Béat, Toulousian merchants exploded part of the mountain with gunpowder in order to ruin Formont’s workshops on site.<sup>682</sup> Aside from the whites of Saint-Béat and Carrara, he also provisioned the crown with red from Sarrancolin, two types of marble from Campan, “*meslée de Jaune*” from Sauveterre, and black and white marble from Izaourt. It wasn’t a monopoly because other agents were still providing stones, but Formont’s private entrepreneurial tentacles extended their increasingly wide reach around the marble supplies of France and Italy.

His contract with the *bâtiments* was renewed in 1670, and extended into Languedoc, including property *not* belonging to the crown.<sup>683</sup> Meanwhile, other marble workers and entrepreneurs were exploring and opening up quarries in Provence, while at that very moment construction on the *Canal des Deux Mers* (so prominently visible on Couplet’s table and Testelin’s painting) was ongoing.<sup>684</sup> The canal, which opened in 1681, promised to ease the shipments of marble, avoiding Gibraltar and the long voyage through the Mediterranean, where pirates, storms, and struggles with the English and Dutch frequently threatened to short-circuit the delivery of marble to Paris.<sup>685</sup> Instead of circling around Iberia, French entrepreneurs like Formont could use the canal either to haul marble from the Pyrenees and Languedoc up the canal directly, or to ship marble from Genoa to the canal’s mouth at Sète. From there, the rock would be sailed up to the Garonne which met the canal at Toulouse. In 1775, the Toulousian sculptor François Lucas erected a monument in Carrara marble (not French stone!) at the point of intersection between canal and river which featured a female allegorical figure of Occitanie commanding the male canal to welcome the waters of the Garonne, accompanied by a cornucopia of abundance. Fig. 26 To alleviate the problem of finding ships willing to transport the heavy and valuable cargo, Formont ordered four specially made boats of his own, designed to transport 120-160 tons in 1670 (the *Ville de Mantoue*, *La Colombe*, *La Baleine*, and *Le Turbot*).<sup>686</sup> Since this was prior to the canal’s inauguration, Formont was investing considerable sums into securing the passage of rock.

The situation on the ground, however, remained complex. If tables reduced complexity in order to produce legibility through specific techniques of visualization, returning to the ground

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<sup>680</sup> Ibid

<sup>681</sup> Cited Julien 91.

<sup>682</sup> Ibid.

<sup>683</sup> Ibid, 92.

<sup>684</sup> See Mukerji (2009) for a detailed history of the canal.

<sup>685</sup> War gets in the way of importing marble from Italy. For example in the mid-1660s, shipping is halted until the conclusion of the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, ending the War of Devolution, that navigation can resume in 1668. Bresc-Bautier (2013), 131. Bresc-Bautier (2013) details the bumpy history of marble imports from the Italian peninsula in light of nearly constant European political conflicts. See also Bresc-Bautier (1993) on the disruption in marble imports caused by the War of the League of Augsburg, 41-42.

<sup>686</sup> On ships and shipping see e.g. Mouquin (2018), 123-126.

where marble was quarried multiplies layered entanglements. Formont may have been putting up the money, but who did the marble belong to? How could the crown or entrepreneurs like him encourage (or coerce) people to quarry, drag, and ship it? He may have had his own boats made for Carrara, but how was he to move marble from remote mountains and up rivers in France without the help of local laborers and administrators? And who was to pay road and river tolls, or maintain thoroughfares to ensure they would not be blocked by rain, snow, and mountain debris? The example of the quarry at Caunes-en-Minervois in Languedoc provides an interesting example to examine these dynamics, though the complexity of each local situation makes it difficult to gain a general overview: each quarry had its own specific geography of problems and solutions.

Caunes is located west of Toulouse, along the way to Narbonne and the Mediterranean coast. Numerous marbles were quarried there, but the most famous was the “*grand incarnat*”, a brilliant red used, for instance, in the columns at Versailles’ Trianon. (Fig. 27) It had already attracted the attention of Henri IV, and Louis XIII had the Duc de Montmorency investigate its potential in 1622.<sup>687</sup> In the first half of the seventeenth century, Italian marble workers were busy settling there, some of whom were responsible for surveying the quarry while others traced the blocks and extracted them, furnishing a trade directed back to Italy.<sup>688</sup> The land there belonged for the most part to a Benedictine abbey, though some bits and pieces also were owned by private individuals. Legally, the *sous-sol* (anything underground) belonged to the King. But because the ground itself belonged to the Benedictines and the few property holders scattered around the quarry area, the crown was required to pay a fee in order to quarry the stone. This fee was known as the “*droit de fortage*”. In 1774, Marc-François de Lassus, the *contrôleur général des marbres du roi*, notes that both Louis XIV and Louis XV had fixed this fee at six *deniers* per cubic meter of marble.<sup>689</sup>

In spite of the fixed price, relations between the entrepreneurs extracting marble for the King’s building projects and the abbey were not always easy. Colbert wrote to his *intendant* in Toulouse in 1674 asking for assistance because “there is presently trouble since the Benedictines of the abbey at Caunes claim to have rights [to the marble] and have set up an Italian who has taken over these quarries and even taken several large pieces of the marble that the aforementioned Formont had set aside as columns for the *maisons royales*.”<sup>690</sup> Locals themselves could, theoretically, also quarry marble by paying rent to the abbey (or if they were property holders, on their own properties). But the *droit de fortage* that they were obliged to pay was much more expensive than what the Crown contracted for itself, and they also had to pay taxes to the central government for each block they extracted. Needless to say, this meant that although the area lived from the marble trade, it was hardly lucrative for locals to get involved with quarrying and selling on their own, since the taxes ate away at profits. In this manner, Colbert aimed to secure choice chunks of marble for the King. As entrepreneurs furnishing the crown, Formont et al. also benefitted from the King’s exceptional tax breaks.

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<sup>687</sup> Julien, 86.

<sup>688</sup> Jean-Louis Bonnet, “Rouges du Languedoc, l’exploitation des carrières de Caunes et de Félines en Minervois” in *Marbres des rois*, Pascal Julien, ed. (Aix-en-Provence: Presses Universitaires de Provence, 2013), 55-57 and Bonnet & Julien, “Un temporel de marbre : marbriers, administration royale et religieux de l’abbaye de Caunes-Minervois (XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles)” in *Archéologie du Patrimoine du sud* - 4, 2016 218 Midi Médiéval, supplément, année 2010, volume 1 (2010), 143-151.

<sup>689</sup> Mouquin (2018), 108.

<sup>690</sup> Mouquin (2018), 68, translation mine

The problem at Caunes was, thus, not the issue of accessing marble, which posed great difficulties at Saint-Béat, or Campan for instance in the Pyrenees, where marble quarries needed to be opened with explosives. At Caunes, the “King’s Quarry” (*Carrier du Roy*) was accessible, huge, and seemed to furnish a seemingly endless supply of high quality stone large enough to use as columns and column bases.<sup>691</sup> In 1664, Colbert installed a commissioner *du roi*, Étienne Ducrot, at Caunes in order to oversee the situation, even though Formont was still responsible for the financial side of the operation as well as logistical coordination.<sup>692</sup> In 1684, the King’s marble men extracted almost 50,000 cubic feet (ca. 3000 square meters), for a sum of 300,000 livres. Production was enormous.<sup>693</sup> This was good and well, but how was one to move such large blocks from Languedoc to Paris? Once the marble was quarried, it was transported on carts of either two or four wheels by teams of oxen. An individual loaded *charette* could weigh up to a half ton.<sup>694</sup> Prior to the opening of the canal in 1681, the marble needed to be dragged in this fashion all the way to Narbonne, where it could be loaded onto ships. With the canal, however, the constellation shifted dramatically.

Now the loads of marble only needed to be hauled to the small port in the village of Puichéric on the canal (twenty-three *lieux* from Toulouse). But that did not spell the end of difficulties. After Colbert’s death, Louvois who had taken his position as we know at the *bâtiments* complained that the owners of the fields through which the carts now passed were trying to prevent blocks and columns from passing through, and were indeed taking blocks of marble and selling them to private entrepreneurs.<sup>695</sup> The surveyor of the quarry, Nicolas de Basville, said that “*particuliers ont enlevé des pieces de marbre qui étaient dans ld. Carrier et qu’un ouvrier travaille actuellement à en tirer de nouveaux blocs.*”<sup>696</sup> But de Basville was accused of lying about this several weeks later. Who was to be believed? In 1692 another case of marble-gone-missing resulted in an investigation, which revealed – to the administration’s relief – that there was enough marble left to “build a city like Paris without making a noticeable dent [in the quarry].”<sup>697</sup> Fees that needed to be paid to property owners whose land lay on the path to Puichéric were to be laid out by the official entrepreneurs (after Formont, this job was farmed out by Louvois to a “company” run by several men including the loyal engineer Michel-Antoine Martin, who resided on site). In 1684, the *États de Languedoc* received the order from Paris to build a new road from Caunes to the canal, for which they would pick up the bill.<sup>698</sup> (Fig. 28) In 1748 when this road was in disrepair and the bridge at La Redorte in danger of collapsing under the weight of the marble carts, a sum of 14,000 livres needed to be drummed up. The Comte de Mérinville, whose property the road crossed, took charge of the renovation, while an entrepreneur was contracted for the maintenance and the abbey had to pay for the bridge, since the diocese was responsible for public roads. The logistical constellation at Caunes was, as we

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<sup>691</sup> In his 1758 *mémoire sur le marbre*, Lassus wrote, “La carrier est inépuisable, le marbre solide, on lui odonne tells dimensions qu’on veut...”. Cited in Mouquin (2018), 66.

<sup>692</sup> Bonnet (2013), 61.

<sup>693</sup> Mouquin (2018), 69.

<sup>694</sup> See Alain de Beauregard, “Une enquête singulière en Languedoc dans la première moitié du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: La diffusion des marbres pyrénéens en royaume de France, convoyage, commerce et commande” in Julien (2103), ed. 105-122. See also Julien, 151-155.

<sup>695</sup> Mouquin (2018), 68.

<sup>696</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>698</sup> Bonnet (2013), Julien 151-155, and to virtually visit the “*sentier*” or path of marble in the Caunes district – currently part of a regional tourism circuit – see <http://www.marbresenminervois.eu/marbres.php?lang=fr>.

have detailed, complex and, because marble provided the livelihood for so many different parties and sets of interests, infighting was frequent. This, though, was only the beginning of the marble's journey to Paris.<sup>699</sup>

### *A Mosaic of Moving Parts*

Alongside these localized intricacies of the marble's movement, the stone's trade also precipitated the movement and migration of people, from Italy, as well as other parts of France (largely along its eastern borders in the Franche Comté, which supplied the Pyrenees with expert metal workers). The migration and development of the marble quarries, in turn, caused social and material landscapes to change: new associations and alliances formed, new roads and ports were built. These needed to be maintained and expanded. If we turn back to the question of how marble may have "mapped" France, one can say that in fact each stone block carried with it a slew of social and spatial negotiations that emerged from the marble trade itself. The symbolic qualities of marble that were so valued in France, and which made the stone so desirable to the monarchy, carried sociological and geographical weight, as well as geological heft. The desire for stone created its own *chassis*, which both altered and framed socio-economic conditions and physical environments in new ways. Marble structures and objects produced in Paris did not simply refer indexically to the site at which the stone originated, but mapped France anew as the desire and consumption for marble grew according to the perceived needs of statehood (magnificence) beginning in the 1660s.

For Pierre Formont, by 1680 the journey had abruptly stopped, ten years after receiving the permit to "*fouiller*" in the ground around Caunes from Colbert. As protestants were excluded from working for the crown, Formont's business empire dried up quickly. Colbert protected him and by 1683 was even still paying him large sums for the marble that had already been quarried.<sup>700</sup> But his contracts were not renewed, and he died several months before the formal revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which sent protestants like Formont's family into exile.<sup>701</sup>

Turning to Couplet's table, this is something to keep in mind. The white marble of the sea and the rivers is made of Carrara, one of the stones that Formont had earned remarkable sums for importing to the French court from Italy. His personal boats had traversed the milky *mareion* to bring that material via cart, ship, raft, and sloop to Paris. The pictorial economy of the table's map makes each of these passages appear fluid and effortless, as if the rivers and sea simply flow to the court of France, like so many arteries pouring abundant blood into the body's heart. Yet as we have seen, each leg of the stone's journey posed a unique set of problems and negotiations, not to mention material displacements. While the table presents "France" as a unified and self-evident form, our excavation of the marble's material history reveals that the production of the sea's white surface depended on a complex negotiation of (foreign) relationships: Italian marble had to be imported to France under duress and the financial motor behind that importation – Formont – eventually found himself an outcast, his family exiled and business ruined due to his religious affiliation.

Returning to Caunes: Arrival in Puichéric meant that new sets of contracts needed to be established with rafters who could bring the stone to Toulouse. These rafts were built by people

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<sup>699</sup> Caunes Incarnat does not feature in the table we are examining, but the canal is prominently displayed, as are the other waterways that brought marble to Paris.

<sup>700</sup> Ca. 200,000 livres from the *bâtiments* in 1683. Sarmant, 225.

<sup>701</sup> Bresc-Bautier (2013), 136.

who were selling timber up the canal. They consisted of seven or eight trunks of tightly strapped together pine trunks.<sup>702</sup> Each raft was manned by ten to fourteen paddlers, depending on the weight of the stone, and none of them were keen on transporting the extra ballast of heavy blocks of marble, which threatened their safety, as well as the wood they hoped to sell downstream.<sup>703</sup> These rafts could only sail from April through June, when the snow had melted and the water ran high, the weight of the crates no doubt sinking the paddlers' feet into the icy mountain runoff.<sup>704</sup> Movement was difficult on these mountain waterways; the heavily-laden rafts were tossed over rapids and frequently had to negotiate branches and stones that had tumbled into the streams and rivers and blocked their path.<sup>705</sup> Even at Caunes, which was relatively well-connected to the new transport network established by the *Canal des Deux Mers*, sailing was not cheap. The canal trip itself cost 7.5 sols and demanded the further requisition of rafts and labor too, once the first leg of the trek from the quarry to Puichéric had been made and the marble unloaded on the town's *quai*.<sup>706</sup> In Toulouse, the blocks were deposited at the Port Garaud, where they were weighed to determine canal costs, and where the pine wood rafts were dismantled for sale as timber.<sup>707</sup>

Here, a similar story began anew, since the blocks would need to be shipped up the Garonne river to Bordeaux, and it was unclear who actually owned the rights of passage: had the King purchased the *droits du canal*, or was he to disburse payments to property holders whose lands abutted the canal?<sup>708</sup> Leaving Toulouse, the newly loaded barks needed to negotiate an artificial rapid, which had been built in order to funnel water to the city's mills (the *passelit de Bazacle*). (Fig. 29) This bump caused a loaded bark to fly three meters through the air, meaning that even at this early point in the journey, numerous vessels were wrecked and blocks of marble strewn ashore.<sup>709</sup> Similarly, when it rained, the Garonne flooded, causing the barks carrying the marble – manned frequently by off-duty sailors from Bordeaux – to be stranded. It was not easy to recuperate them. In 1689, the engineer at Caunes, Martin, wrote to Louvois to encourage him to remove the marble stocks that were stored in small ports around the Garonne, “for fear that the great waters don't flood the terrain and disperse the blocks in the sand.”<sup>710</sup> Thus the unencumbered veins of water flowing through the map on Couplet's reveal themselves as both a fiction and a geographic truth: the veined marble *did* flow to the French court *but* the flow was anything but unencumbered.<sup>711</sup> The French countryside was littered with the King's magnificent

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<sup>702</sup> See Julien, 156-161 and Mouquin (2018), 116-123.

<sup>703</sup> Ibid.

<sup>704</sup> Ibid and Mouquin, (2018), 118.

<sup>705</sup> Ibid.

<sup>706</sup> Ibid.

<sup>707</sup> Ibid.

<sup>708</sup> Mouquin (2018), 121.

<sup>709</sup> Julien, 159.

<sup>710</sup> Cited in Mouquin (2018), 118 (translation mine).

<sup>711</sup> In keeping with his activities in the Great Forestry Survey of 1668, Froidour had begun to take measures to ensure the flow of water. Though his interest was primarily in timber, the timing was fortuitous since it coincided with increasing mobilization of marble for Versailles. The measures he took, however, were never sufficient to ensure the free flow of water in the Garonne and the Neste, let alone smaller waterways. See Julien, 159. To give a sense of the further “fiction” of unencumbered flow, one ought to note that the complex network of customs houses and fees that needed to be paid locally for water travel were legion. By the 18th century, there were at least five tolls (*péages*, *octrois*, tolls connected to excise duties aides, and *droits de marque*, plus the *gabelle* (salt tax) and *tabac* crown monopolies *and* customs duties traits or douanes that needed to be paid to transport wares by river in France. *Péages* were commonly collected at convenient points on roads and rivers – most justified by legal titles – that were largely in private hands though, although the Crown made “spasmodic” attempts to consolidate and acquire them

stone; waterways needed to be reconstructed and constantly managed in order to avoid clogging.<sup>712</sup> (Figs. 30-32) In Paris, one could see bits and pieces of the fragments of French ground that had successfully made the voyage arriving at the Port de la Conférence from the vista afforded by the Pont-Neuf. Already in 1665, Paul Fréart de Chantelou (b. 1609) observed that he and Bernini passed the day of June 21 looking for marble, “*L’on fut aux Tuileries et le long de l’eau, puis en divers autres lieux...*”<sup>713</sup> (Fig. 33) The blocks were loaded and unloaded against the backdrop of the Louvre, so that all of Paris knew that the kingdom’s resources were being harnessed and manhandled to *build* in a *stately* fashion.

The details of the marble blocks’ further journey are fascinating, but for present purposes, our trek stops here.<sup>714</sup> The marble trade was part and parcel of Colbert’s mercantile project; it was imbricated in the construction of major infrastructural projects like the *canal des deux mers* and the requisition of wood from France’s forests to build a stronger navy. Thanks to its symbolic importance, marble was folded into these schemes to rebuild state and indeed the marble trade profited from them. The canal facilitated transport; rafts were made from timber that could be used in shipbuilding, sailors could man boats along the Garonne, and the navy even periodically provided protection for important marble shipments either in the Mediterranean (where it was no guarantee against piracy) or from Bordeaux to Paris, via Le Havre and Rouen. The crown itself provided cords and cables to lash the stones and wood together (a key expense), so that one might say that just as on our table the bits and pieces of *pietra dura* mosaic adhere tightly together to form a map of France, when it came to the marble trade, the crown’s tentacles began to extend over French ground in this period and to recreate its appearance and infrastructure.<sup>715</sup> Social relations and spatial relations were reformulated around and through marble in order to tighten that ground together and fashion it into a literal figure: Apollo’s glittering marble palace, promised to him by Aeneas at Cumae. The fulfillment of an ancient promise was facilitated by modern engineering and statecraft, and Rome relocated to Paris. The French were ironically never able to renounce their dependence on Carrara (with or without

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(e.g. Colbert in 1664). J.F. Boshier, *The Single Duty Project: a study of the movement for a French Customs Union in the Eighteenth Century* (London: University of London, 1964). This caused transport to be both lengthy and expensive, since stops were constantly having to be paid for inspection. For example, a boatman taking a load of cask staves from Lorraine to Sète in Languedoc had to stop 22 times to pay 38 different duties and *péages*. Thus iron produced in Franche Comté lost about 35% percent of its value through transport to Marseille – it was actually less expensive to import iron from Russia! Boshier, 20.

<sup>712</sup> It was only in 1712 that the *bâtiments* actually had maps made of the Pyrenees and the Garonne. Hippolyte Matis produced a remarkable series of large topographies that follow the entire course of the Garonne, comprising fourteen meters in length total, from Bordeaux to the Pyrenees where the river has its source. Using these, it was easier for the *surintendant des bâtiments*, the Duc d’Antin locate junctions that could be singled out for improvement works. Accompanying Matis was a team employed to clean the river, and determine where roads and bridges needed to be improved. From the quarry at Bayrède, a new road was built and the Duc d’Antin found a supply of timber for shipping purposes. The supply was his own, since conveniently the quarries lay on his property. He thereby made a profit from selling wood directly to his own agents, and also encouraged the use of Sarrancolin marble instead of other regional types: a shift in taste that worked to his financial advantage. We find Sarrancolin today all over the *Salon d’Hercule* at Versailles and in the form of the fireplace in the *Apartement du Roi* as well. The social and the political never ceased to collide (or mutually reinforce themselves) in marble provisioning. See Mouquin (2018), 55-59 on Sarrancolin and D’Antin.

<sup>713</sup> Cited in Mouquin (2018), 95. See also Anne-Lise Desmas, “In Search of Marble in Paris for Gian Lorenzo Bernini’s Bust of Louis XIV: A Letter from Charles Perrault to Jean-Baptiste Colbert” in *Getty Research Journal*, 2009, No. 1 (2009), 169-178.

<sup>714</sup> See Julien 162-169 and Mouquin (2018), 123-128.

<sup>715</sup> Julien, 169.

Formont's provisioning). There simply was not enough white marble of high quality to be quarried in France. But the material processes involved in the ongoing Carrara trade and the concomitant development of the French marble industry point us to consider how the map-cum-mosaic-cum-table presents not just an image, but a material record of a kind of lived cartography bound up in the economy of stone.

*Royal Red: the Case of Belgian Marble from the Border*

What then of France's borders and the borders on Couplet's table? Above I recounted Pliny's condemnation of Rome's obsession with marble as an erasure of nature's boundaries, which he saw as being wantonly carted away for Roman "pleasure". Is there a way to understand the nearly obsessive retracing of edges on the marble table in material terms, as we have tried to do with the white of the table's sea? In the following section of this chapter we will deal more with the question of style, but for now I suggest that we ought to briefly investigate the marble used to build those borders into the table.

If we think of this object as providing both an image and a materialization of the French state, we've seen already how fluid this image might be in spite of the table's stasis. Pierre Formont was a key figure in supplying the crown's marble facades and table-tops- albeit with Italian *and* Southern French marbles. For years, he was "in". But as a protestant, he found himself in 1680 suddenly cast out, or rather, his family did since he died, on the heels of his patron Colbert, before he could be exiled. The marbles used to articulate the alternating borders of gray and red on Couplet's table were two highly recognizable stones. The red, in particular, from Rance, was one of the most frequently used marbles at Versailles. It in fact came from a quarry known as the "*trou*" (or hole) of Versailles. This "hole" was, for most of its history, not in France at all. The village of Rance is on the border with Hainault, in the very same region where Vauban was building his iron wall of defense during this period. Unlike the story of Formont, who moved from "inside-out", the story of Rance is one that moved the other way around: "outside-in".

One of the only images of early modern Rance that survives today is from the *Albums* of Charles de Croÿ (1593), the lord of Hainault in the late sixteenth century. Rance here appears as a tiny and peaceful hamlet, with a clutch of small houses around a modest church. (Fig. 34) From the image, one would never suspect that Rance and the region were to make their fortune in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as hotbeds of the marble trade, particularly while the construction of Versailles was in full swing. There are a few different types of marble that came from Rance, but the most famous and most recognizable is known as "Vieux-Rance". This marble has a reddish-brown ground, with gray veins and a generous sprinkling of large, off-white splotches that *marbriers* of the period called "*queues de rats*" (rat tails). These "tails" are known scientifically as *thamnapora micropore*, and the stone itself stems from the Frasnian period, i.e. 382 million years ago. It was found in Rance in several quarries in such abundance that it became, ahead of Caunes, the most frequently used marble at Versailles. One of the quarries known as Rocs was the famous Versailles "hole." (Fig. 35) Belgian marbles like Rance had already been exploited by the Romans, and more recently in the seventeenth century had been sought by European courts including Denmark, but none of this was on the scale of the French exploitation that would flourish in the 1670s and 80s.

There were several reasons for its popularity at Versailles. For one, it could be quarried in massive chunks. In 1673, for instance, the Flemish *marbriers* Jérôme Derbais and Hubert Misson

delivered a monolithic piece measuring ten feet in diameter for the appartement des Bains (now in Versailles' Orangerie). (Fig. 36) Secondly, it was much closer to Versailles than the marbles in the South. This did not mean there were not, however, considerable logistical obstacles to be overcome regarding the transport. One of these difficulties was that the giant blocks of marble somehow had to be dragged to a river that connected to Paris. Today there are several theories about how this was accomplished. Some believe that Louis XIV's engineers chopped down a wide swath of oak forest to build a road from Renlies to Cousolre and then Valenciennes in order to roll the stone on carts. With blocks, or indeed columns and architectural details already fashioned at the quarry, it seems perhaps more likely that the marble was taken by cart to the small port at Pontavert and then sailed up the Aisne to the Oise, and then to the Port de la Conférence.<sup>716</sup> Alternatively, large columns or tubs could have been sailed instead over waterways through the commercial strip of the Meuse river, and through Dordrecht then the Channel. In any case, as the marble was moved, it necessitated a re-organization of both the physical landscape and human labor in order to facilitate its passage, just as it did in the south.

Another difficulty was war. Rance and the county of Beaumont found itself at the crossroads of French-Habsburg tensions. First dependent on the Duchy of de Croÿ, *the county passed to Spain, then to France from 1684-1698, and then Spain again (it remained under Spanish rule until 1712 when the Viennese Habsburgs installed the Kurfürst of Bavaria as ruler). Within less than a century, it had been part of at least four polities. But even war could not halt the French desire for stone. In order to procure the stone efficiently, Colbert recruited locals. The first generation of Flemish marbriers to work for the bâtiments was comprised of Derbais, Misson, Jean Le Grue and the Deschamps brothers, who were responsible for introducing not only Rance, but also gray Saint-Anne, as well as black and white Dinant, stones and Barbançon marbles into use at the Louvre, Val-de-Grâce, and, finally, Versailles.*<sup>717</sup>

*The Flemish marble workers were naturalized in France in the 1660s, which essentially meant that they had the right to pass on an inheritance to their heirs instead of forfeiting their money and goods to the Crown.*<sup>718</sup> *Becoming French meant becoming a man of property and, indeed, the Derbais, for instance, produced heirs who later were to commission the painter François Boucher's first salon decorations in 1732 for their mansion on the Rue Poissonnière, next door to the Missons.*<sup>719</sup> *Having turned French, Derbais was issued a passport by the Crown in 1674 in the midst of the war with the Dutch so that he could continue scouting out and importing marble. The passport requested that the Rancois "faire lever tous les passages que besoin sera et empêcher que nos troupes et gens de guerre ne fassent aucun trouble ni incommodité aux ouvriers travaillant sur les carriers où sie tierent lesd. Marbres (...). Prions et requérons les rois, princes et états nos amis allies et confédérés de lui (Derbais) donner en cette occasion l'assistance don't ils seront requis offrant en cas pareil faire le semblable."*<sup>720</sup>

As the passport text indicates, the business of marble ought not to be disrupted by war; its political import was too great to be slowed by even the theatre of war. On Couplet's table, the Flemish marble bands seem to hem in France, encircling the object with thick walls of resistance. This reiteration of the closed aspect of the tables edge on one hand highlights the object's claims

<sup>716</sup> See Mouquin (2018), 48-53 and Eric Grossens "Les Marbres de Flandres et du Hainault à Versailles", in Julien (2013), 37-55.

<sup>717</sup> On the lives of the Flemish marble workers in France, see Mouquin (2018), 139-180.

<sup>718</sup> On "becoming French" in the Ancien Régime see Peter Sahllins, *Unnaturally French: Foreign Citizens in the Old Regime and After* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

<sup>719</sup> Mouquin (2018), 146.

<sup>720</sup> Cited Ibid, 49.



for stasis and stability, while at the same time contrasting with the way in which the map itself opens up visual room for French expansion into the very region where the Belgian marbles originated. Precisely because the mosaic is divided into provinces, which, thanks to the materiality of the marble, appear to grow like vegetation; France appears to grow naturally into the areas along its borders. With rivers as white bands graphically announcing “closure”, France seems to grow through Hainault and through Alsace, creating an expanded border zone comparable to what Vauban was building with his fortresses: an iron double band of walls. If Vauban encouraged the king to square his territory (“*faire son pré carré*”), Couplet’s table did so by visually incorporating Hainault into French space and then *materially* incorporating it as a rectangular border around the table’s map. The Flemish marble workers were naturalized French, and the table suggests that Rance and Saint-Anne marble are French too. Officially, these quarries would indeed become French in the very year that Couplet offered his gift: 1684. Wish fulfillment?

The semantic slippage was easy. At Versailles, one could never overlook Rance. It is to be found in the most prominent spaces of the palace: in the *Cour de Marbre*, Columns of Rance stretch upward to the King’s bedroom and apartments of state; the Escalier des Ambassadeurs was filled with Rance, on the stairs but also around the Van der Meulen Flemish battle scenes that appear as “windows” frescoed onto the staircase walls; in the Hall of Mirrors, it is Rance that sparkles alongside gold and mirrors; in the Salon d’Hercule; the Queen’s staircase, the lining the Salons de Diane and Vénus and the entryways of the Salons de la Guerre and de la Paix, Rance makes itself visible. (Figs. 37-38) At every threshold and juncture of import in the palace built in the first part of Louis XIV’s reign, the small “outsider” quarry town makes a feature appearance. Perhaps most tellingly, Rance was even present in the bathtub, the object that came into closest contact with the King’s physical body.<sup>721</sup> Where Rance appeared, so too did the King, at least metaphorically. The marble could stand in for his presence. Just as the quarry came to be known (prior to the French takeover of Hainault) as the Hole of Versailles, the material of Rance marble came to stand in for the French state in spite of the ambiguity of its political/legal status. Its symbolism overrode political and geographic complexities.

This integration of the material into the French state was facilitated by the strong cultural associations attached to both marble and the color red. Frequently, Rance was referred to simply as “jasper”, for instance in Mme de Scudéry’s description of the Staircase of the Ambassadors as “*un marbre jaspé*.”<sup>722</sup> In referring to it as jasper, the association with the Flemish border was weakened in favor of the symbolism of Heavenly Jerusalem: jasper was heavenly light, an assertion made good on in the Hall of Mirrors, where Scudéry would write in reference to the jasper and gold walls that the space appeared as if “lit by the sun itself.”<sup>723</sup> Boèce de Boodt, the author of Rudolph II’s jewelry treatise, observed also that red jasper had curative properties: it stopped the flow of blood, he claimed, while displaying nature’s creativity and playfulness in its images, like a painting.<sup>724</sup> The King’s marble, it would seem, exploded the boundaries of the possible with its *éclat*. It’s red tone highlighted these symbolic and associative dimensions: red is

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<sup>721</sup> “*L’on a observé d’employer ceux qui sont les plus rares et les plus précieux dans les lieux les plus proches de la Personne du Roy,*” writes Félibien in *Description du chateau de Versailles, de ses peintures, et d’autres ouvrages faits pour le Roy* (Paris: Denys Mariette, 1696), 287.

<sup>722</sup> Madeleine de Scudéry, *La promenade de Versailles* (Paris, 1669), 41. See Mouquin “Pour Dieu et pour le Roi...” (2012), 220.

<sup>723</sup> Scudéry, *Conversations Nouvelles sur Divers Sujets, dédiées au Roi* (Paris: Barbin, 1680), 19.

<sup>724</sup> Cited in Mouquin “Pour Dieu et pour le Roi...” (2012), 221. It also could be used to prevent women from getting abortions, and help to precipitate birth, he writes.

the color of blood, of the Passion, or Christ's sacrifice. It is, as Sophie Mouquin has observed, the color of divine love, of the King, and of God.<sup>725</sup> It was marble itself that revealed qualities about him that otherwise could not be expressed: that which was innate and interior to the King became legible and exteriorized in stone. The King's marble objects expressed – though never completely – the magnificence of his inner *status*.

An undated portrait of Louis XIV by Hyacinthe Rigaud, or one of his followers, now at the Chateau de Chenonceau brilliantly stages the ways in which we have tried to track how the material of marble operated during this period in France along both territorial (geographical) and symbolic registers. (Fig. 39) In the painting, Louis stands front and center, his left elbow jutting into the viewer's space, while his right hand lightly grips a commander's baton, which extends downward to the marble surface of a table to Louis' left. Billowing curtains part miraculously to reveal a landscape. While the portrait is martial in character (the King reveals his sword at bottom right), the landscape behind is bucolic, not unlike the images of Rance, Rocs, and Barbançon from the *Albums de Croÿ*. (Fig. 40) The viewer cannot really see the landscape, because Louis' figure blocks it: HE is the beginning and end of our horizon. However, the table under the thumb of his baton can be understood as standing in for the landscape we cannot see. It is impossible to identify with certainty which (if any) marble the table is supposed to represent. It could, likely, be Rance (we see the characteristic white and gray splotches and "rat tails"), but it could also be *Grand Incarnat* from Caunes, or another red marble type. The specificity of the marble, however, is not of paramount importance. Of interest here is the way in which the painting uses the table visually to create a link between the interiority of the King/om and the landscape beyond.

We may be able to see the King physically, but his thoughts remain obscure. He gazes archly out toward the viewer, prudently – as befits a head of state – veiling any direct expression of emotion. He is stoic and controlled. The table's marble surface, however, betrays the symbolic associations with his interior we have detailed above: Passion, Love, Wisdom, Fortitude, Compassion. A gilded border surrounds it, with the characteristic *bec de corbin* downward-turning *moulure*, supported by a set of ionic legs outfitted with a Roman-style laurel-leaf crown of victory as a swag between the table legs. The marble surface itself is raised above the table's edge so that the painter can more strongly emphasize the way in which the table's surface gleams in the light, like gold (think back to the Hall of Mirrors, lined with Rance, glass, and glistening gold). (Fig. 41) The table stands in for the monarch's body, it is analogous to him, and if they human figure were absent, we would be encouraged to look for him within the materiality of the table itself because it is not only *like* the King, but is also *revelatory* of his true nature.

This nature is a double one: it is the King's nature (his person) *and* the nature of his Kingdom, that which springs forth from the earth under his jurisdiction. We remember that red is also the color of the heels on Louis' shoes, as we saw in Testelin's depiction of the Académie des Sciences. The King touches the earth with his red heels and marks it as his. (Fig. 42) And in this case, the earth has come into the painting in the form of the red marble tabletop. We cannot visually access the landscape beyond, fully. But, as tabular forms most often do, *this* table, made of earthy red stone, reveals itself completely to our gaze.

Often in this genre of portrait in the seventeenth century, a table serves as a surface upon which elements are placed that offer clues or evidence about the portrayed subject. In Rigaud's 1726 portrait of the successful merchant Samuel Bernard, for example, the table's surface is piled with letters, a globe, a quill for writing and other tools of mercantile identity. (Fig. 43) In

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<sup>725</sup> Ibid, 222.

the background we see a seascape with trading ships. The table is a repository of objects that clarifies the sitter's identity, it allows them to accumulate and signify plainly. In the case of this particular portrait of the King, however, the table is bare. Its surface is what we see. This surface also has revealed itself to Louis' gaze: the gesture with the military baton shows us that he has conquered the ground beyond the table in the background. The painting suggests that, in fact, this ground has been conquered and then polished into the form of the table, which is square and defensible, because it is visible. Just as Vauban suggested; victory (the laurel wreath) comes with the creation of a defensible, bounded space from which resources can not only be extracted, but polished so that they gleam. Moreover, the King's imperious but inscrutable gaze suggests that the viewer also treads upon conquered ground. We are on the King's ground, the rectangle he has conquered (his *pré carré*) and it is through his magnificence, his *state* of mastery that we, as viewers, will become *more* than what we are without him.

His presence implicates the viewer in a process of transformation, like the earth cut and polished into a magnificent tabletop: the fruits of his conquest will be peace, which in the painting is translated into the balanced plane of a table that is also stone extracted from the ground and artfully polished. As Pascal Julien observes, the concept of polish was associated with both skill, civility, and "taste" (distinction, following Pierre Bourdieu). In Furetière's dictionary, the verb to polish is ascribed a civil virtue, it is part of a process of removing roughness, which is both associated with material "*inégalités*" and moral deficiency. The court and the King exert this civilizing force, "polishing" those who visit. "*On dit aussi*", writes Furetière, "*que la cour polit bien les gens de la Province.*" The royal workshops also polish stone taken from the provinces, making it, like French courtiers, "*fort durs, mais fort polis.*"<sup>726</sup> Strong, polite, shining: Louis' conquest of the French social and spatial landscape will give way to good *management* of natural resources, and to abundance, a table ready to be laden with the fruits of the Kingdom, supervised by the King and his men.

Such are the rhetorical claims staked by the painted portrait and Couplet's table. These claims carry a legal dimension by marble's association (we recall again Furetière's definition of a table) with the tablets of Moses and the Commandments. The court's polish and Louis' conquest is not only beautiful and admirable, but *just*. In the scene of the Aeneid referred to by Couplet's table, Anchises tells his son Aeneas that the Roman's arts are also part of a legal responsibility to manage war and peace., he says, "*Tes arts à toi sont d'édicter des lois de la paix entre les nations, d'éparner les vaincus, de dompter les superbes.*"<sup>727</sup> The painting suggests that the imposition of kingly authority, for instance through the distribution of *tables de marbres* as courts managing natural resources around the kingdom, will allow France to grow and shine, something visible in its marbles, but also resembling its glittering, balanced, monarch.<sup>728</sup> France, like its ruler, is *sovereign*, the maker of just laws, a *status* reflected in magnificent state of its ruler's palace, which points in turn to the magnificent state of his (nation) state; the earth – here in the guise of rock - is formed into a second nature, a "*figured world*" of power.<sup>729</sup> Here, that figuration process assumes the forms of the King and the table, which is simultaneously a portrait (*tableau*) of him and of his kingdom.<sup>730</sup>

<sup>726</sup> La Bruyère, cited in Julien, 246.

<sup>727</sup> Cited in Julien, 239.

<sup>728</sup> See Ibid, 240.

<sup>729</sup> Mukerji (1997), 406.

<sup>730</sup> In his writing of stones, Caillois evocatively observes, "for a stone represents an obvious achievement, yet one arrived at without invention, skill, industry, or anything else that would make it a work in the human sense of the word, much less a work of art. The work comes later, as does art; but the far-off roots and hidden models of both lie

Louis himself took an active role in deciding on architectural matters at Versailles, including selecting marble.<sup>731</sup> Pascal Julien has noted, for instance, that the deployment of a somewhat dull reddish-brown marble with white veins originating in the Bourbonnais was specifically used according to the King's wishes for the symbolic connection it drew between the Bourbon dynasty and its roots in the soil (veins like milk, color of blood).<sup>732</sup> In the Rigaud portrait with a similarly colored table, the relationship between beholder and monarch is not nearly as reciprocal as it is in Couplet's gift, where the scientist has offered the King his ground and polished it for him. But in both cases, the object of the table draws attention to the ways in which the figure of the monarch connects to representations of the ground he aims to control in a territorial sense. The table is what connects the King's status figuratively with the state of *lo (suo) stato*.

### *A Legible State: Distributed Knowledge and Speaking Stones*

The marble table thereby bridges two concepts of statehood. On one hand, the marble is revelatory of the magnificent status of the monarch. On the other, the marble table speaks to the land itself over which he rules, land that must be stewarded, mapped, and shaped if it is to produce to its full capacity. Mukerji has argued that the *Canal des Deux Mers* was an instance of a shift from a concept of state under personal rule to impersonal rule. The canal, she observes, mobilized natural resources and individual expertise in ways that created a structure of dispersed knowledge.<sup>733</sup> One person could not maintain the canal, or build it, because a diversity of knowledge was necessary to get the job done. And once the canal was built, this distributed knowledge was necessary to ensure that it functioned properly (maintenance was key). The taming of the natural resources of the earth (water, ground, wind) demanded constant maintenance, so that the modern "state" of France understood as a political-geographical unit could be said, retrospectively, to have emerged from projects that prioritized the development of earth works like canals, fortresses, and gardens. In other words, projects meant to glorify the personified ruler in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, actually spelled the ultimate demise of the personified state and opened the door for a new concept of statehood based on an impersonal and horizontal distribution of professional expertise and resource management.

Vauban may be understood as a key agent in this process. He not only worked on the canal, but the tables and projects associated with land management (*mésnage*ment), in particular his *Projet d'une Dixme Royale*, have been understood by geographers and political historians as some of the first instances of political and economic geography. That is to say, they offer a concept of the state as a structure which derives value by calculating and managing its human and natural resources by delineating that space with borders and then calculating what lies inside.<sup>734</sup> As Quentin Skinner and other historians of the state, including Foucault, have tended to highlight, in the early modern era the concept of sovereignty was more associated with the

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in the obscure yet irresistible suggestions in nature." And, further, "their values are intrinsic, without external reference." Caillois, 2 & 4.

<sup>731</sup> Starting in 1671 Louis began to examine marble samples for Versailles himself. Pierre Verlet, *Le Château de Versailles* (Paris: Fayard, 1985), 41. In 1684, he exempted the transport of marble for the crown from any taxes and tolls, since "*attendu leur destination, car tel est notre Plaisir*", cited Julien, 213.

<sup>732</sup> Julien, 240

<sup>733</sup> Mukerji (2009), 203-228.

<sup>734</sup> Jean, Gottmann, "Vauban and Modern Geography" in *Geographical Review*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Jan., 1944), 120-128.

domination of or alliance with *human beings*, rather than control of space per se. A ruler, in other words, ruled *people*, not *territory*.<sup>735</sup> The notion of the modern state as a territory filled with resources that need to be exploited and, as Foucault would later assert, kept “biopolitically” in shape, was a later development. The Couplet table — and others like it — map the transition from the early modern to the full-fledged “modern: In the cultivation of a politics of marble, as well as in Vauban’s tables, a territorial concept of statehood as a tableau of resources came to mix with a concept of sovereignty associated with legal relationships between men. For tables were one way of making resources visible, and also legible. They are hybrid, or synthetic objects: between legibility and visibility, as we have seen.<sup>736</sup>

The material of marble, in particular, and its ability to manifest magnificence played a pivotal role in this process. In Marc-François de Lassus’s 1758 *Mémoire sur les marbres envoyés au surintendant des bâtiments du roi*, the contrôleur of Pyrenean marble actually did make a table of Pyrenean marble resources, mapping out thirty-something veins that were currently being exploited in tabular form (though not including those that had been laid still).<sup>737</sup> In 1774, the King of Spain offered the King of France one of the first examples of a table comprised of 108 marble samples with numbers corresponding to a booklet (now lost) that would have listed information about the samples.<sup>738</sup> (Fig. 44) At that point in time, the interest in classifying marble according to a “cartographic” type of rational geography and scientific classification system was making itself manifest. In our period, nearly a century before, marble “mapping” operated with more slippage. It mediated more ambiguously between personal and impersonal figurations of sovereignty. It made the French king manifest, but it also altered the landscape and demanded inventive new forms of governance as well as engendering new material infrastructures that needed to be maintained over time. These structures and the stone itself thereby exerted a type of “impersonal” authority. This authority, however, was not divorced in this period from the authority of the King, or his person. The language of royal symbolism in many cases ran stronger than the “rational” language of cartography.

Let us now return to the question posed at the chapter’s outset: Did and marble stone serve as a “map,” and, if so, in which ways? In the case of Couplet’s table, one could say that the symbolism of marble overrode the importance of geographical accuracy. The stones inlaid into the map did not come from the locations they represented. Yet the use of stone itself, and the presentation of stones as part of an infrastructure of fluvial transport networks, has much to say at the same time about the construction of the Bourbon state, from the ground up. That is what makes this particular table so evocative of a slow, but perhaps incipient shift in modes of representing statehood at this particular historical juncture and in light of the French monarchy’s insatiable appetite for marble.

An art historian might ask whether “the period eye” of the era thought about these things when they visited Versailles and looked at its marble? It seems very likely that a broad French audience, in fact, did. Knowledge about marble was widely available at the time. For French authors enjoyed hailing the triumph of Louis XIV over the Ancients (and Italy) in a variety of texts extolling the collection and deployment of French marbles at Versailles. In 1686, the editor of the *Mercurie Galant* praised the newly installed Grande Colonnade in the garden and linked its beauty to the exploitation of national resources as one of the King’s achievements: “*le Roi est le*

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<sup>735</sup> See Stuart Elden, *The Birth of Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

<sup>736</sup> Daston has argued this for printed tables, but I am extending the argument here to Louis’ furniture.

<sup>737</sup> Mouquin (2018), 159.

<sup>738</sup> Mouquin, “Agate, Jasper and Sardonyx...” (2012), 85.

*plus magnifique prince de la terre et fait voir que le marbre est présentement plus commun en France qu'en Italie.*"(Fig.) Authors like Jacques Savary des Bruslons declared Colbert's marble policies a huge success:

*quoique les montagnes de France soient aussi remplies de carriers de marbres qu'aucune autre des États voisins et qu'il y ait des marbres français capables de le disputer en finesse de grain, en durété & en poli aux plus beaux marbres étrangers, ce n'est quere cependant que depuis la Surintendance des Batiments de Monsieur Colbert, qu'on s'est appliqué seriuesement a exploiter celles qui étaient déjà decouvertes, & a en fouiller de Nouvelles qui n'ont point fait regretter les peines & les dépenses qu'il en a couté d'abord. En effet, ces marbres sont si beaux & en si grande quantite que depuis l'annee 1664, on n'en a guère employé à Versailles & dans les autres maisons Royales, qui en sont pour ainsi dir toutes baties, que de ceux qui ont ete tires des carriers du Royaume...*<sup>739</sup>

In his *Cours d'Architectures*, furthermore, Augustin-Charles d'Aviler boasted:

*Si les anciens n'ont rien épargner pour la découverte des marbres, les Modernes (particulierement en France & en Italie), n'ont pas eu moins de soin de les rechercher: & ce qui fait qu'on a tant découvert de marbres inconnus aux Anciens, c'est que la plupart des terres d'où les Grecs & les Romains faisaient venir ceux don't ils se servaient, sont aujourd'hui possédées par des peuples avec qui nous n'avons point de commerce, ainsi la nécessité nous a fait rencontrer chez nous, ce que l'ingratitude des Barbares nous aurait pu refuser.*<sup>740</sup>

D'Aviler's praise for French marbles thus directly echoed Colbert's mercantilist ethos: instead of depending on imports, France would discover its own resources and cultivate them, broadcasting its resourcefulness to the world. Notably, the colonial dimensions of Colbert's mercantilism manifested themselves as well in an ultimately unsuccessful endeavor in 1687 to scout for marble in the Saint Lawrence river, the Saint-Pierre islands, Cap Bréton and the Île Persée, according to the orders of the lieutenant general for the King in new France. Though stone was discovered, there were no resources available to quarry and ship it back to Europe.<sup>741</sup> That an effort was made to do so, however, indicates the extremely high value placed upon marble as a political resource.

Descriptions of the particular stones at Versailles were also widely available. In his architecture books, D'Aviler published lengthy descriptions of various types of stone and its geographical origins. And in his *Description du chateau de Versailles* (1696) as well as in his *Principes de l'architecture* (1676) André Félibien went into great detail about the types of marble used in contemporary French architecture (e.g. "*un autre marbre versastre qu'on nomme de Campan & qui vient des Pyrenées*", "*Un beau marbre d'Agathe qui vient de Serancolin & du collé des Pyrenées*", "*Tout le marbre don't elle est ornée est de couleur de feu, avec des veines blanches...marbre rouge de Languedoc*", etc.)<sup>742</sup> Félibien waxes poetic, exclaiming, "*tous ces lieux sont pavez & enrichis de différentes sortes de marbre qui le Roy a fait venir de plusieurs*

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<sup>739</sup> Bruslons (1723) cited in Mouquin (2018) cited 29-30.

<sup>740</sup> Charles D'Aviler, *Cours d'Architecture* (Paris: Mariette, 1710), 211.

<sup>741</sup> Mouquin (2018), 30.

<sup>742</sup> Félibien, 29-32.

*endroits de son Royaume, où depuis dix ans l'on a découvert des Carrieres de marbre de toutes sortes de couleurs & aussi beaux que ceux que l'on amenoit autrefois de Grece & D'Italie.*" (sic)<sup>743</sup> Félibien's guide to Versailles thereby maps not only the palace, but grounds the palace in French soil.

In 1699, an official "*politique des marbres*" consolidated itself in the *Bâtiments*. What Colbert had begun by organizing competition between individuals, and Louvois had transformed into a monopoly business handed over to a company of entrepreneurs and specialists became under their successor, the architect Jules Hardouin-Mansart instituted a veritable central administration of marble. This essentially meant implementing the type of surveillance to which Colbert's mercantile, statistical tables had aspired. Instead of farming out responsibility to private entrepreneurs, the state now oversaw the entire "mapping" of marble from quarry to royal storehouse. A *contrôleur general des marbres* in Paris supervised *contrôleurs* in the Pyrenees and Languedoc, as previously mentioned, and these in turn supervised their inspectors in the Provinces. In the capital, marble was inventoried in the royal storehouses and a price was fixed for sale to *particuliers*, who only had the pick of pieces that the King's *contrôleurs* had rejected. Anyone disobeying was legally required to return marble procured by other means and pay a very substantial fine of three thousand livres.<sup>744</sup> This control made price-fixing easy: Hardouin-Mansart raised the sale price by four or fivefold, making marble cripplingly expensive. This reinforced the King's claim to primacy as manifested in the liberal display of marble at Versailles, while also drumming up revenue for what previously had been a losing business (the re-sale of marble).<sup>745</sup> Upon Hardouin-Mansart's death, prices dropped again, an indication of the ways in which governance in the period was still so strongly associated with individuals as opposed to the anonymous, or impersonal bureaucracy of a modern nation state. Yet subsequent laws (*arrêts*) passed in 1725, 1730 and 1765 extended centralized control of national stone resources, gathering power into the hands of an administration of dispersed specialists: a flatter, if still pyramidal structure.<sup>746</sup>

In her analysis of the Florentine table with which we began this exploration of marble tables as mapping devices, Hannah Baader highlighted the ways in which Medici territorial/mapping impulses make themselves manifest through the depiction of a set of lighthouses and towers planted in the lapis surface of table. These towers mark attempts to monitor the sea, which in the medium of stone appears to swirl and whirl around them. The blue stone's wild patterning builds an unruly contrast to the attempts by the Medici to form a network of measured control.<sup>747</sup> The result is an object that stages not only the process of its making (the import of lapis lazuli by sea), but also a tension between the forces of nature and man's attempt to regulate nature's uncontrollable dynamism. (Fig. 45) By contrast, the French table that we have been examining exhibits few, if any, signs of unruliness. Its fragmented surface bespeaks an obsession with control: the ordering of space, the command of resources. On its surface, the mystical symbolic aspects associated with marble appear fully tamed and harnessed to the goals of the state. This state is one tightly bound together, through a network of material intersections, which we have followed on the ground, so to speak. These networks spanned geographies of

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<sup>743</sup> Ibid, 287.

<sup>744</sup> Julien, 100, Mouquin (2018) 88-94, and Bresc-Bautier & Du Mesnil.

<sup>745</sup> Ibid.

<sup>746</sup> Ibid.

<sup>747</sup> As Baader writes, "The vibrant materiality of the stone creates – and at the same time destroys – the illusion of the Livorno seascape and therefore plays both with an against mimesis.", Baader, 163.

mountain, sea, and river as well as a panoply of agents. These human agents brought together the court and its power players, like Colbert, Louvois, and the King, as well as marble inspectors, entrepreneurs, bankers, sailors, cart drivers, local landowners, and rafters. Not all of them directly touched Couplet's table. Yet we've seen how the stones – Rance, for instance, or Carrara – that we find in the table implicated a massive marshalling of human and natural resources, even if they appear in this particular object as only small bits of a much larger puzzle.

This mosaic of people and places found a materialization, I have suggested, in the marble mosaic that is the table's planar top. This plane oscillated between a literal manifestation of control over French earth and resources and a symbolic mode of communication that had legal, royal, and divine associations. In this pairing, a new image of the modern French state emerged, one that exceeded verbal and also metrological description. The table's material body conjoined France as a space with the figure of the King yet was greater than either one taken independently. Marble *mattered* in the double sense that it was important and that its matter—that is, its substance with all of its attendant qualities—was understood as offering something vital to the representation of the French state. The *éclat* of the stone expressed something which an economy of words and numbers could not represent on their own. It materialized something previously unseen: both a king and a kingdom; a state of magnificence and magnificent French state.

*Un bloc de marbre était si beau  
Qu'un statuaire en fit l'emplette.  
Qu'en sera, dit-il, mon ciseau?  
Sera-t-il dieu, table ou cuvette?*<sup>748</sup>

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### Act 3

#### One of a Kind, or Furnishing Royally

*Introduction: "de n'aimer que le poli"*<sup>749</sup>

In the previous scenes of this episode of *On the Table*, we have examined the many networks and individuals that were implicated in Couplet's gift of a marble table. As we have seen, these networks extended throughout the France of Louis XIV, drawing together a dispersed logistical and a cartographic mosaic of expertise, places, persons, and materials including rock, water, and wood. We have not yet, however, addressed several key aspects of "table-ness" at Versailles, and we have also left certain key agents of the table's story out of the equation. We will now, therefore, turn our attention to how the King's furniture was *made*. I will begin, in section one, by setting the scene with some observations about what it meant for furniture at the French court to be royal. In section two, I will then turn to how that royalty was produced at the royal workshops. This will introduce yet a new set of characters who furnished the French state with magnificence. It will lay out a historical groundwork that we will use, in the section that

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<sup>748</sup> Jean de La Fontaine, *Fables*, IX, VI, *Le Statuaire et la Statue de Jupiter*.

<https://www.lafontaine.net/lesFables/fableEtr.php?id=886>

<sup>749</sup> Paul Fréart de Chantelou cited in Béatrix Saule, "Le premier goût du roi à Versailles. Décoration et ameublement" in *Gazette des beaux-arts*, n 120 (1992), 137-148.



follows, to make some more analytical observations about the *style* of French tables under Louis XIV, particularly in relation to the ways in which they deploy borders, animals, color harmonies, and what the French called *compartiments*. With these observations in mind, we will finally discuss in conclusion how tables were placed at Versailles and how they not only signified, but served as an *ordering force* in the palace that mapped social relations.

*Nec Pluribus Impar: crafting objects like no other*

In a comment reported by Paul Fréart de Chantelou in 1665, Colbert is said to have informed “His Majesty that even should he find no pleasure in beautiful things, it was incumbent upon a great prince to show that he appreciated them and to commission all these types of works.”<sup>750</sup> We have seen already how Colbert placed such a premium on the deployment of marble in architecture. It served as a means of memorializing the reign for posterity, as well for articulating political dominance over French resources *and* demonstrating that France had assumed the mantle of cultural and technological dominance from ancient Rome. When it came to the commissioning of “beautiful things” for these marble edifices, tables were a big interest — especially marble tables. There were two reasons for this. One was that marble tables referred to the Classical past, as we will later discuss. The second reason was that objects like tables were “architectural” pieces of furniture in the seventeenth century (as opposed to smaller objects like folding stools, which could be moved around).<sup>751</sup> Marble tables, though, were large and they were heavy. They were not scattered about piecemeal in a room like they are today, where they cater to different chairs, sofas, or gathering points strewn willy-nilly across a space. In the seventeenth-century palace there was *no* willy-nilly.<sup>752</sup> Nor were there many tables that functioned as “silent butlers”, i.e. that stood around waiting for small things to be taken out of pockets and put on top of them. They were not part of a regime of convenience (*commodité*); there were, of course, also very few cushioned chairs, or anywhere to sit at all and relax.<sup>753</sup> In the French court, people stood. They did not sit, except for the King, the royal family, and several high-ranking duchesses who were allowed to squat sometimes on stools and tabourets. Fig. 46 Just as Vauban’s iron line of defenses walled in “Fortress France” by erecting barricades to control points of exit and entry, courtly French furniture and clothing re-enforced an architecture of material, corporeal, and psychological restraint and hierarchical discipline—hard and durable

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<sup>750</sup> Cited in Antoine Schnapper, “The King as Collector” in *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* Vol. 17, No. 1, The Evidence of Art: Images and Meaning in History (Summer, 1986), 199.

<sup>751</sup> See Vincent Cochet, “L’utilisation par les menuisiers et les ébénistes” in *Identification des Marbres*, Jacques Dubarry de Lassale, ed. (Dourdan: H. Vial, 2000), 36 and Nicolas Courtin, *L’art d’habiter à Paris au 17e Siècle: L’ameublement des hôtels particuliers* (Dijon: Fatou, 2011), 112-171. On mobile furniture in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, see also, Pierre Verlet, *French Furniture and Interior Decoration of the 18<sup>th</sup> century*, trans. George Savage (London: Barrie & Rackliffe, 1967).

<sup>752</sup> See Courtin, 148-156 and Peter Thornton, *Seventeenth-Century Interior Decoration in England, France and Holland* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 7-25.

<sup>753</sup> On the evolution of “silent servant” furniture, to use the German expression, see for example the definition of “*garderobe*” in German in Ludwig Julius Friedrich Höpfner, *Deutsche Encyclopädie oder Allgemeines Real-Wörterbuch aller Künste und Wissenschaften* (Frankfurt am Main: Varrentrap und Wenner, 1786), 66. The French (imported) word *Garderobe* (follows gardenia) designates bourgeois furniture that has developed to take over the role of servants who dressed their masters at court and sometimes slept in the spaces where clothes, jewels, and other accessories resided. Silent furniture replaces the human labor, which as we will see later in this chapter, was crucial in making the state visible at the French court.

like marble.<sup>754</sup> Clothes hemmed in one's movements, especially the *grand habit* worn by women on public occasions.<sup>755</sup> There was nowhere to take refuge, but there were a lot of glittering, impenetrable marble expanses and polished gold, silver, or bronze surfaces to admire.

Comfort was not important.<sup>756</sup> What mattered was the way in which expensive resources could be put on display so that they both reflected the presence of an overarching social and aesthetic order while simultaneously ordering social interactions themselves. Thus, the few important items of expensive furniture there were did not budge. They were too heavy to move and they needed to be protected, not carried around and used.<sup>757</sup> They were not "*meubles*", as the French call furniture today, but *immeubles*, like the French word for a building (console tables attached to the wall actually extended the wall into the room, and vice versa, the furniture into the architecture). They stayed in place and their fixed positioning declared the stability of the social and material order. Their arrangement was always symmetrical so that the composition of space was balanced around a central axis that highlighted the singularity of monarchic authority. If there were a fireplace in a room, it would find a counterpart on the opposite wall with a large table, buffet, or console. These could be made in the same marble as the fireplace.<sup>758</sup> Console tables also stood opposite bay windows as a means of creating spatial equilibrium.<sup>759</sup> Color was coordinated for, as Katie Scott has observed about somewhat later French furniture, "the coherent decorative statement evinces a cultural competence in marked contrast to the fumbling uncertainty of those outside the orbit of polite society."<sup>760</sup> Coordination, balance, and expense were obvious markers of distinction. Gold, silver, and red predominated in first half of the Sun

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<sup>754</sup> We are reminded again of La Bruyère's comment that courtiers at Versailles were "*fort durs, mais fort polis.*" Cited in Julien, 246.

<sup>755</sup> See George Vigarello, "The Upward Training of the Body from the Age of Chivalry to Courtly Civility", in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body, Part Two*, Michel Feher, Ramona Naddaff and Nadia Tazi, eds. (New York: Zone, 1989), 149-199 and on the development of fashionably comfortable clothing in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century Joan DeJean, *The Age of Comfort: When Paris Discovered Casual – and the Modern Home Began* (New York & London: Bloomsbury, 2009), 186-228. As DeJean writes, the bodice "took control over the body of the woman inside it. Thus attired, one woman's body looked very much like the next. The stays were designed to flatten the bust completely, creating a rigid shape that, while it gave a regal air, made women anything but alluring or approachable. Women in formal dress were always portrayed standing, for that is what the garment allowed them to do best. The stays guaranteed perfectly erect posture. When they sat, women didn't need a chair for support; the bodice took care of that." 187.

<sup>756</sup> It was only in 1690, for instance, that French dictionaries began writing that fashion should be comfortable ("the best way to dress is to dress comfortably"), *Ibid.* 191.

<sup>757</sup> The Farnese family left instructions for taking care of their famous marble table: "A wooden box to protect this table and a chain with loops to close it and in the middle a small mattress full of wool, covered with a quilted checkered cloth; and a cover for this table, made of tooled and gilded leather with four fringes, decorated borders and fleur-de-Lys." Cited Olga Raggio, "The Farnese Table: A Rediscovered Work by Vignola" in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, New Series, Vol. 18, No. 7 (Mar., 1960), 215.

<sup>758</sup> The accounts for the *Bâtiments* include, for instance, a note for furnishing and apartment at Versailles in which everything is done in green Pyrenean marble: "A slab of green Campan marble, . . . to make a mantelpiece, 2 tables and 2 fireplace foyers for Madame de Pontchartrain's apartments, in Versailles." Cited in Cochet, 37.

<sup>759</sup> *Ibid.*, 36. See also Mimi Hellman "The Joy of Sets: The Uses of Seriality in the French Interior" in *Furnishing the Eighteenth Century: What Furniture Can Tell Us About the European and American Past*, Dena Goodman and Kathryn Norberg, eds. (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), 129-53.

<sup>760</sup> Katie Scott, *The Rococo Interior: Decoration and Social Spaces in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 109.

King's reign, serving as the chromatic poles around which other colors rotated.<sup>761</sup> Writing about the King's gardens at Versailles, Saint-Simon observed that it "gave the king pleasure to tyrannize Nature and to tame her by expending art and money... One feels repelled by the constraint that is everywhere imposed upon Nature."<sup>762</sup> One could say the same of the palace's interiors, where nature in the form of stone and wood was similarly corseted.

Within this aesthetic framework (truly a *chassis*), the free-standing *pietra dura* marble table could be placed in the center of the room, as a kind of accent, or eye catcher.<sup>763</sup> As we have already seen, such a table was simultaneously a stand-in for the King. His other furniture stood in for him too, but the large marble table in the center of the room was especially evocative of the King's power of presence. While other tables like consoles found a pairing in windows or mirrors or fireplaces, the central marble table stood alone and autonomous. It was a furniture "star", a generally rectangular sun around which all the other furnishings rotated, just as the courtiers rotated around the King. It was like the other furnishings, but more mighty, and distinct in its position. The painter Henri Testelin, whose portrait of the *Académie des Sciences* we discussed earlier, noted that "the function of perspective was principally to facilitate the legibility of a pictorial narrative by so judiciously aligning the point of central perspective with the object or action of the composition's primary focus, that the spectator was enlightened in a single, instantaneous *coup d'oeil*."<sup>764</sup> A marble table in the center of the room grabbed attention, made itself the composition's "primary focus"; it drew the gaze and it revealed itself immediately, it expressed an authority in a manner that was unmistakably legible *in the blink of an eye*. When Jean de la Fontaine traveled to Richelieu (in Limousin) in 1663, he visited the dead cardinal's chateau where his attention was less taken by the paintings on display than by a large *pietra dura* table, which he said "*fait le principal ornement de Richelieu*", thereby conflating the deceased duke and his palace through the fulcrum of the table.<sup>765</sup> (Fig. 47) At the center of Richelieu's fabulous table, La Fontaine observes, was a giant agate, as large as a "basin", with delicate veins; the "queen of agates"; nothing more "rare has come to us from the banks where the Sun begins his journey."<sup>766</sup> The object, he thus suggests, was marvelous and even otherworldly, exhibiting a kind of gravitational force that pulled people to it.

The dead cardinal's table shared this quality with the furniture of the Sun King. It was, in a word, unique. Uniquely expensive, uniquely wrought, uniquely ornate, uniquely splendid. There was no other furniture like it in the realm, perhaps in the world (at least, that was the ambition). The furniture in the King's palace was supposed to be unique because the King's socio-political position itself was unique, a quality expressed in Louis XIV's somewhat obscure motto *nec pluribus impar* ("not unequal to many").<sup>767</sup> As Keith Baker has argued, the French

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<sup>761</sup> See Sophie Mouquin, "Versailles, un édifice de marbre : le rouge de Rance et les harmonies colorées versaillaises" in *Les Wallons à Versailles*, Carole Carpeaux, ed. (Waterloo: La Renaissance du Livre, 2007), 355-388 and Cochet, 37-39.

<sup>762</sup> Cited in Thomas Parker, *Tasting French Terrior: The History of an Idea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 79.

<sup>763</sup> Cochet, 36.

<sup>764</sup> Testelin cited in Scott, 157.

<sup>765</sup> Jean de La Fontaine, in letter IV from *Lettres de Jean de la Fontaine à sa femme sur un voyage de Paris en Limousin* in *Oeuvres Complètes de Jean de La Fontaine* (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1811), 623.

<sup>766</sup> Ibid.

<sup>767</sup> Louis XIV himself acknowledge the obscurity of the motto: does it mean, not unequal to many, or equal to none? In his memoirs to the Dauphin, he wrote, "I know that some obscurity has been found in these words, and I have no doubt that the same symbol might have suggested some happier ones. Others have been presented to me since, but this one having already been used in my buildings and in an infinite number of other things, I have not deemed

king was meant to be representative “in the strong sense that a multiplicity can indeed be made only in the unity of his person... The king represents the whole, not in the sense that he is authorized by the body of the nation to act on its behalf, but precisely because the nation exists as a body only in the individual person of the monarch.”<sup>768</sup> Cultural historian Leora Auslander has pointed out that this uniqueness of the monarch’s political position (as representation itself, not as a representative *of* others) was manufactured into his furniture.<sup>769</sup>

The objects in the palace *were* the King. Or rather, as we have already mentioned, they were not his *personally*, but belonged to his office, to the *Maison du Roi*. The uniqueness of their style embodied the uniqueness of this house. They were political in that they placed their guardian/owner in a certain relation to the state: he embodied it, and was greater than all the other parts of that state. These other elements combined materially and metaphorically in the furnishings themselves, as we already saw with the varieties of marble used at Versailles. Cost was a prime concern in this attempt to embody stateliness through furniture. For in order for furniture to be uniquely royal, it had to remain outside of the financial range of others. Its price and manufacture had to be so exclusive that even the upper nobility could not hope to rival the King’s example (Richelieu and Mazarin were dead, and the disgraced finance minister Nicolas Fouquet was imprisoned, so those who may have previously vied with the King through their own lavishness were relegated to invisibility).<sup>770</sup> That was the aim of the marble monopoly too: the crown chose the best bits, then sold off the inferior leftovers for inflated prices to a nobility eager to emulate the Crown as best they could.

By the late 1660s, the panegyric style cultivated around the person of the Sun King by the Académie des Inscriptions (founded in 1663 by Colbert) was being translated into the King’s furnishings, as part of a massive redecorating program first for the Louvre and eventually at Versailles.<sup>771</sup> The furniture built to make his (and France’s) position in the world manifest had to surpass all that had come before it; it needed to transcend the past just as Louis XIV aimed to present himself as “not unequal to many”, or “equal to none”. To mark the Bourbon monarchy’s

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appropriate to change it.” Cited in Robert W. Berger, *The Palace of the Sun: The Louvre of Louis XIV* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1993), 15.

<sup>768</sup> Keith Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth-Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 225-226.

<sup>769</sup> Leora Auslander, *Taste and Power: Furnishing Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 29-35.

<sup>770</sup> In 1765 Lefèvre de La Planché Tome III p. 531-2 underscored that royal furniture “étans d’une richesse qui ne peut être imitée qu’avec de grands frais et à grands prix, ne doivent point être mis au rang des particuliers, ni suivre les mêmes règles.” Cited Stéphane Castelluccio *La Garde-Meuble de la Couronne et ses intendants du XVIe au XVIIIe Siècle* (Paris: CTHS, 2004), 47.

<sup>771</sup> On the intimate connection between the Gobelins manufactory and the literary Petit Academie see Florian Knothe, *The Manufacture des meubles de la couronne aux Gobelins under Louis XIV: a Social, Political and Cultural History* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 85-100. Louis himself detailed the goal of his decorative program as follows, “Comme il n’y a rien qui marque d’avantage la magnificence des grands Princes que leurs superbes palais et les meubles précieux dont ils sont orbez, la plus part des roys nos prédécesseurs ont pris grand soin de la construction des uns et de la fabrication et conservation des autres. Les beaux morceaux d’architectures qui se remarquent dans nos Maisons royales, et ce qui nous reste des riches tapisseries et de beaux meubles, sont des effets de leurs inclinations et servent de monumens à leur gloire. C’est par cette raison, qu’à près avoir donné la paix à nos peuples dans le mesme temps qui nous travaillons à leur en faire goûter les fruits par la reformation de abus et le rétablissement du bon ordre, nous travaillons aussy au rétablissements de toutes nos Maisons, mais sur tout à l’achèvement du bastiment de nostre chasteau du Louvre, et en mesme temps à faire faire des meubles très riches de toutes sortes proportionnez à la grandeur et à la Majesté de ces admirables édifices...” cited in Castelluccio (2004), 55.

unique position as inheritors of Rome, but also modern innovators, Antique design elements thus were combined in Louis XIV furniture with modern materials: fashionable marbles, of course, but also tortoiseshell, exotic tropical woods like mahogany, ebony, horn, or pure silver from the Americas.<sup>772</sup> This luxury could not legally be alienated from the Crown and it also could not be truly imitated.<sup>773</sup> Any attempt to emulate it would immediately have been perceived as inferior, since the material splendor could simply not be matched. And these objects were constantly on display. There was no private/public split for the French King, as in Britain.<sup>774</sup> His *things* were always on view, they were visibly *immeuble*, immutable, like his claim to power.<sup>775</sup>

People were supposed to see them, and they could do so in his palaces, including the Tuileries where marble encased cabinets and tables were on display, at the Louvre, eventually at Versailles where the most modern and fashionable pieces were installed, and also in the *Garde-Meuble* itself in the former *Hôtel du petit Bourbon* on the Seine just behind the Louvre.<sup>776</sup> There, the bottom floor included studios for conserving and repairing furniture and was not accessible to the public. The upper floors, however, could be visited so that the monarchy's furniture could be wondered at. Germain Brice reported in his guide to Paris of 1684 that one could see tapestries there, the King's golden Nef (shortly thereafter moved to the cabinet of curiosities at Versailles), silver plate, vases of precious stone, and the King's commission of eighty-two carpets woven at the Savonnerie carpet manufactory,<sup>777</sup> as well as "historical" items like the buffet of Francis I, or a tapestry of the *Histoire de Proserpine* that once belonged to Queen Marguerite.<sup>778</sup> When the Siamese ambassadors were given a tour of Paris in 1686, they were presented with sixty magnificent beds in this "warehouse" of furniture treasures.<sup>779</sup>

If these older items of furniture offered a kind of royal genealogy, with objects standing in for ancestors (like the beds in which the fertile family line was conceived), the drive to uniqueness meant that Louis XIV's style also needed to distinguish itself from everything that

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<sup>772</sup> Auslander, 44-47.

<sup>773</sup> As Auslander notes, this would change under Louis XV when the court began to auctioning off furniture; this set the possibility of new forms of emulation into motion and made the King's "body" accessible in ways previously unimaginable under Louis XIV. "Louis XIV's power was inseparable from his things – his things were the fetishes of his power; Louis XV and Louis XVI were separable from their things, but their power was inseparable from the capital invested in those things. Like their predecessors, Louis XV and Louis XVI could not afford to be without objects of unsurpassed magnificence, but objects once faded could unproblematically pass into someone else's possession as new royal objects took their place." Ibid, 54.

<sup>774</sup> Ibid, 62-63.

<sup>775</sup> Béatrix Saule, "Insignes du pouvoir et usages de cour à Versailles sous Louis XIV" in *Bulletin du Centre de recherche du château de Versailles Sociétés de cour en Europe, XVI<sup>e</sup>-XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle - European Court Societies, 16th to 19th Centuries*. Last accessed 11.11.2020, <https://doi.org/10.4000/crcv.132>. See also Louis Marin, *Portrait of the King*, trans. Martha M. Houle (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

<sup>776</sup> Castelluccio (2004), 68-74 Félibien described the sumptuous furniture at the Tuileries, including stone-encrusted *stipi*, vases filled with jasmine and orange trees, paintings hung by ribbons and silk cords, "*si industrieusement disposez espace en espace selon leur grandeur que cette symétrie cet arrangement augmentoient de beaucoup la beauté de la décoration*" *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellens peintres anciens et modernes*, t. II 3e partie (Paris: Sébastien Marbre-Cramoisy, ed. 1685-1688), 3. See also Castelluccio, "La Présentation des Collections Royales Durant le Règne de Luis XIV" in *Louis XIV: L'Homme & Le Roi*, Alexandre Maral and Nicolas Milovanovic, eds. (Paris: ESFP, 2009), 64-71.

<sup>777</sup> The Savonnerie was the the royal carpet manufacturing outlet; it was founded in conjunction with Henri IV's efforts (described below) to institute royal workshops, but received a new lease on life under Colbert and Louis XIV in 1664. See Pierre Verlet, *The Savonnerie : its history : the Waddesdon Collection* (Fribourg, Switzerland : Published for the National Trust by Office du livre, 1982).

<sup>778</sup> Castelluccio (2004), 47 and (2009), 73-76.

<sup>779</sup> Ibid (2004).

came before not only in terms of materials but also in terms of style. Richelieu and Mazarin had both been fans of Italian furniture, importing *pietra dura* tables, as well as heavy cabinets called *stipi*.<sup>780</sup> (Fig. 48-49) Artisans favored by Colbert and Louis XIV like Pierre Gole (a Netherlander born in 1620 who worked independently as a “*maître menuisier en ébène ordinaire du roi*” in the rue de L’Arbre-Sec on the right bank<sup>781</sup>) initially also produced French versions of Italian forms early on in their careers.<sup>782</sup> But this began to shift over time, as Louis’ personal power consolidated itself and encased itself in stone for posterity at Versailles. The design imperative that imposed itself was to create a French style out of Italian fashions, which in the case of marble tables themselves harked back to classical Antiquity. Antique references were still manifested through the deployment of certain geometric proportions and uses of materials both Classical and Modern. Sumptuary legislation, on top of the exorbitant costs Louis and Colbert were willing to pay for these objects, legally prohibited imitation, just as the furnishings themselves were bound inalienably to the crown. Furniture was not only part of a legal and political regime, but generated law in order to ensure that luxury functioned as a means of reinforcing royal authority.<sup>783</sup>

### *Re-forming the world of furniture*

The costs of furnishing royally were high, but price was not the only challenge to be overcome in the display of French magnificence. An equally important issue was how to negotiate the social world of French furniture manufacturing and how to *remake* that world so that it could produce the kinds of objects that the crown desired. Furniture making in the early modern world took place in a complex and highly regulated landscape of guilds. These guilds existed to control quality, manage skilled labor and training, and structure the market.<sup>784</sup> They operated according to a strict distribution of labor, which meant that furniture making was divided into different categories of crafts, skills, and tasks. For example, within woodworking, there were different strictly defined roles. *Ébénistes* and *menuisiers* had different practices and perceived themselves differently. The *ébénistes* were responsible for surfaces, for instance on case furniture, especially with inlay work and veneers. *Menuisiers*, on the other hand, were

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<sup>780</sup> On Mazarin as a collector, see Patrick Michel, *Mazarin, prince des collectionneurs : les collections et l’ameublement du Cardinal Mazarin 1602-1661* (Paris: histoire et analyse, Réunion des Musées nationaux, 1999). On Louis’ development as a collector see Antoine Schnapper, “Trésors sans toit : sur les débuts de Louis XIV collectionneur” in *Revue de l’Art*, n°99 (1993) 53-59 and Castelluccio (2009).

<sup>781</sup> Though just a stone’s throw from the Louvre, Gole’s workshop was independent, which meant that he did not automatically have a ready market in the Garde-Meuble nor did he benefit from the elevated social status and financial rewards of being an *artisan du roi*. Gole was, however, a favored supplier of elegant wooden furniture and his deployment of marbles and precious stone as inlay testifies to the close working relationship he maintained with the royal workshops. On Gole (and other favored furniture makers), see Gérard Mabilie “Le Mobillier de Louis XIV” in *L’Homme & Le Roi*, Alexandre Maral and Nicolas Milovanovic, eds. (Paris: ESFP, 2009), 77.

<sup>782</sup> *Ibid.*, 77-78.

<sup>783</sup> Auslander, 75.

<sup>784</sup> On French craft guilds see Auslander, 74-140 and Michael Sonenscher, *Work and Wages: Natural Law, Politics and the eighteenth-century French Trades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Sonenscher writes, on the subject of the guilds/trades relationship to the Crown, “The act of apprenticeship was analogous to the primordial alienation of natural liberty. It implied entry into the rule-bound social existence of civil society, embodied in this instance by the statutes of particular cooperations.” 75; submitting oneself to the regulations of the grid, just as to the authority of the King, was not perceived as challenging natural law, but rather opening up avenues for freedom of action within an established political framework, which one had knowingly entered.

responsible for building weight-bearing structures, like carcasses for chests, or chairs.<sup>785</sup> Yet they were part of the same guild and collaborated in order to manufacture objects. Nonetheless, in spite of their close working relationship, they were in different corporations, tended to live in different neighborhoods, come from different backgrounds, and have different identities.<sup>786</sup> *Marqueteurs* in turn, practiced a subset of the craft of the *ébénistes*, doing complex inlay work. Turners worked with a lathe on table and chair legs, while sculptors worked with hand tools like chisels and files to sculpt ornament on furniture. Metal workers, of a different guild entirely, were equally subdivided between “*doreurs, argenteurs, démasquineurs, ciseleurs, enjoliveurs sur fer*, etc.” depending on the medium and task at hand. In order to complete a sophisticated piece of furniture, these many guilds and corporations needed to work together.<sup>787</sup> Inevitably, this caused tensions, which the crown needed to manage although it, in turn, depended on the guilds to reproduce a skilled labor force. The master craftsmen of the guild trained apprentices and journeymen, ensuring that knowledge and quality craftsmanship were passed down.<sup>788</sup> While this had obvious advantages, it also meant that because guilds were so embedded within a system of social and professional reproduction, there was little internal incentive in a guild to make shifts in style. The reiteration of known patterns affirmed both the longevity of a craft and also the quality that could be associated with familiar forms and known quantities.<sup>789</sup>

There were, however, other production options that the crown could take advantage of, or cultivate. The monarchy supported the guilds as a necessary means of ensuring the production of high quality French goods in general, but to satisfy its own needs, the crown also created its own means of production and made use of craftsmen working outside of the guild system. Because foreigners were largely excluded from the guilds — only Catholic Frenchmen could officially become masters — this meant that French royal furniture made by royally patronized artisans was in fact quite often fabricated by foreigners. “Louis XIV” style was ironically produced in large part by a process of “naturalization” that made use of ways to circumvent guild regulation, while still encouraging the guilds to continue producing quality wares. Outside of the guild structures, there were various options for furniture makers to make a living. One was to become a royal artisan, another was to work at a royal workshop (like the Gobelins, to be discussed in more detail), or to work directly for the *Garde-Meuble*.<sup>790</sup> Another possibility was to work independently in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, a neighborhood settled in an area belonging to the church (the convent of St-Antoine-des-Champs) and hence also exempt from guild regulations.<sup>791</sup>

There were three royal manufactories in operation in Paris by the time that Couplet had his table made. One was at the Louvre, one at the Arsenal, and one at the Gobelins. Their growth coincided with the consolidation of the Bourbon monarchy. Earlier attempts had been made by

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<sup>785</sup> Auslander, 86-88

<sup>786</sup> Ibid.

<sup>787</sup> Ibid, 85. All of these artisans were also dependent on the *scieurs de long* (sawyers) whose mills prepared the wood, which usually was moved in “herds” of logs floated down rivers, as we have seen with the timber of the Pyrenees. In Paris, timber was taken to the Isle Louvier where trees were processed and sawn into planks or veneers, then dried. Drying was done at the lumber yard and surveyed either by the mills or the furniture makers. It could last from a few years for inexpensive furniture to twenty years for the wood substance destined for a fine object like a musical instrument to dry. Ibid, 81-82.

<sup>788</sup> Ibid, 110-139.

<sup>789</sup> Ibid.

<sup>790</sup> Ibid 89.

<sup>791</sup> Ibid.

the Valois to found workshops to furnish and embellish their palaces (most famously Francis I and Henri II and his mother Catherine de Medici).<sup>792</sup> It was ultimately Henri IV who, having survived the wars of religion, founded the workshops at the Louvre in 1602 (protected by letters patent in 1608) in order to consolidate the position of the monarchy both in France, and in relation to Italy since the Louvre venture aimed to rival and surpass the Medici sponsored *Accademia del Disegno* (1536) and the *Opificio delle pietre dure* (1588).<sup>793</sup> He also granted royal letters patent to two Flemish tapestry masters named Marc Comans and François de la Planche to settle in Paris and establish a French tapestry industry (having past the first trade law in 1599 prohibiting the import of tapestries made abroad).<sup>794</sup>

The newly reorganized ateliers at the Louvre regrouped master craftsmen from different guilds and disciplines, including wood and metal workers, engravers, printers, silversmiths, weavers, and mathematicians and cartographers. The artists working at the Louvre benefited from accommodation, a title as *artisans du roi*, and sometimes direct employment in the royal household. The *artisans du roi* were also exempt from guild regulation and controls. In return, they trained apprentices and promoted the growth of expertise in the arts in France.<sup>795</sup> These efforts to build a cutting-edge French luxury artistic production machine remained modest, however, although they were connected to and bolstered by Henry and the Duc de Sully's (Henry's *conseiller d'état* and *surintendant* of finances) simultaneous efforts to centralize and reform the government, including the *bâtiments* and the *Garde-Meuble*.<sup>796</sup> The rejuvenated monarchy was to express the unity and authority of its *state* in the production of furniture to be displayed in its palaces, (just as Sully and Henry's military mappers were building a new cartographic archive of French space). Under Louis XIII this project to bolster French manufacturing through the promotion of *artistes du roi* continued, but still remained relatively small-scale, hampered by ongoing wars and different political priorities.<sup>797</sup>

Since they were free from guild strictures, artisans working in the Louvre could work across media. This meant that a *menuisier* like André-Charles Boulle who was settled there could start to operate not only as a *menuisier*, but an *ébéniste, ciseleur, doreur, et sculpteur du roi* beginning in 1672. Most of the workers at the Louvre worked individually. They broke with guild traditions and created unique and lavish pieces of furniture with innovative forms, like Boulle's famous metal marquetry and luxurious tortoiseshell (Boulle work) commodes, with their curved bodies, which are today closely associated with Louis XIV style. (Fig.50) In the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, individual furniture makers also found a haven outside of the restrictions of the guilds. The area was outside the city, which gave artisans place to store supplies, and since they were outside of the guild confines as well they could sell their work more cheaply than their organized rivals. Foreigners were not excluded from the Faubourg, and the goods produced there tended to be more varied, differing in each workshop depending on its scale.<sup>798</sup> Some artisans there could see through the production of a complex multi-media piece of furniture, while others in smaller ateliers specialized, for example, in turning chair legs exclusively.<sup>799</sup> Since the foreign presence was great, many forms and techniques that were

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<sup>792</sup> Knothe, (2016) 19-20.

<sup>793</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>794</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>795</sup> See Ibid, 21-24.

<sup>796</sup> Ibid.

<sup>797</sup> Ibid.

<sup>798</sup> Auslander, 93.

<sup>799</sup> Ibid.



popular elsewhere in Europe filtered into the French tradition via the Faubourg, like German veneering. The Bernard Van Risen Burgh dynasty of furniture makers would settle there from Holland in the seventeenth century, rising to produce some of the most sophisticated and famous pieces of innovative eighteenth-century design for both the Crown and private patrons. The distribution of furniture, in turn, could either proceed through direct commissions (as from the Crown), or via producer-guilds, auctions, independent merchants (*marchands merciers*), in open-air markets, or in the Faubourg directly.<sup>800</sup>

This was a complex landscape, full of rivalries, but also familial and professional interweaving; frequently, a journeyman might take over a master's studio, for instance, and marry his widow.<sup>801</sup> In the guild world, ersatz kinship structures were also instituted by the rite of passage known as *compagnonnage*, a tour through France undertaken by journeymen who stayed at houses known as “*mères*” that were run by a “father and mother”.<sup>802</sup> The ideology of the King as “father” of France played itself out in the microcosm of French furniture production workshops, but because of the desires of the crown for furnishings that went against guild restrictions, innovation largely had to be facilitated from above (the Crown) and abroad (foreign craftsmen). New “French” family structures needed to be created in order to make furniture for the Sun King. As in the world of marble, the furniture trade in seventeenth-century France was thus both open and restrictive; it was also undergoing significant changes due to the perceived need for representative items on the part of the monarchy. The particular combination of marble and furniture specifically in the form of *pietra dura* tables, would indeed only be realized in accordance with Louis and Colbert's desires at one single place in this landscape of production: the *Manufacture de la couronne aux Gobelins* created by Colbert in 1662.

### *A Family Affair: Collaboration as an Aesthetic of State*

In that year, Colbert gathered the resources necessary for building furniture that squared with the King's ambitions. He scooped up the artists and craftsmen who had been working for Fouquet's projects at the château Vaux-le-Vicomte under the direction of Charles Le Brun, including tapestry weavers from the workshop organized by Le Brun for the former finance minister at Maincy.<sup>803</sup> Colbert made Le Brun director of the new site where he settled the workers at one of the tapestry workshops founded under Henry IV (named for a Flemish dyer). Le Brun had artistic and administrative know-how and, crucially, experience coordinating large-scale projects encompassing a panoply of media, including sculpture, wood, stone, metal, cloth, and paint. Today, we associate the Gobelins almost exclusively with tapestry, but initially,

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<sup>800</sup> Auslander 101; on *marchands merciers*, see also Carolyn Sargentson, *Merchants and Luxury Markets: the Marchands Merciers of Eighteenth-Century Paris* (London & Malibu: J. Paul Getty Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum, 1996).

<sup>801</sup> For example, in the eighteenth century, the high-profile *ébéniste* Jean-François Leleu seems to have hoped to marry the widow of his master, Jean-François Oeben and to inherit his workshop, though she eventually married Leleu's rival with a different double name: Jean-Henri Riesener. On the latter's furniture and life see Pierre Verlet, *Möbel von J.H. Riesner* (Darmstadt: Schneekluth, 1959). <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/artists/958/jean-francois-leleu-french-1729-1807-master-1764/>

<sup>802</sup> Auslander 130. On the *compagnonnage* see also Cynthia M. Truant, „Solidarity and Symbolism among Journeymen Artisans: The Case of *Compagnonnage*“ in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Apr., 1979), 214-226.

<sup>803</sup> On Fouquet and the tapestry workshop at Maincy see Knothe (2016), 26 and Jennifer Montague, “The Tapestries of Maincy and the Origin of the Gobelins” in *Apollo* 77 (1962), 530-535. Le Brun had been appointed first painter to the King the year before in 1661.

Colbert's interest lay precisely in bringing together masters in all facets of the decorative arts. At the Gobelins, there was ample space for studios in all these media to be established, as well as room for the artisans to live. Foreigners were not only welcome, but were an explicit part of the Gobelins mission to import expertise in order to rival Italian and Flemish luxury production. If, in accordance with Colbert's mercantilist ambitions, France were to stop depending on imports, then foreign craftsmen would have to be resettled and made French. The charter for the Gobelins for 1667 thus was explicit in its requirement of apprentice training on site, since foreign know-how was supposed to be passed on to French heirs. For the artisans of the Gobelins, there was much to be gained. The social status of the *artisan du roi* indicated social distinction, but equally importantly, working at the manufactory meant a constant stream of commissions.<sup>804</sup> Since Le Brun recognized that each of the master craftsmen knew his own craft best, they were responsible for procuring materials and equipment themselves. They were reimbursed, however, for these expenditures and the objects they produced went directly and exclusively to the *Garde-Meuble* which administered all the new acquisitions.<sup>805</sup> An article on the manufactory from 1673 highlighted these advantages noting, "*ils y gagnent aussi beaucoup d'avantage; car outre que leur logement ne leur coute rien, & que le Roy leur paye tous leurs ouvrages, ils ont tous pension de Sa Majesté, laquelle leur est donnée en consideration de leur mérite seulement.*"<sup>806</sup> Masters from the academy of painting and sculpture like the sculptor Antoine Coysevox and Sebastian Leclerc also taught life drawing on site – a training practiced only at the academy and hence normally inaccessible for furniture makers. These teachers received 75 livres a year extra for their efforts.<sup>807</sup> The state also paid for apprentices in order to guarantee a six-year training program, including a year spent in a single workshop where the apprentice was to specialize.<sup>808</sup>

While the Louvre artisans were able to work for and sell to private clients including the Crown, the Gobelins made furniture *only* for the King and his palaces. Writing in his guide to Paris in the 1680s, Brice thus noted that "*depuis plusieurs années, la maison des Gobelins a été remplie d'excellents ouvriers...il faut savoir que tous les differents ourvirers qui sont dans la maison des Gobelins, travaillent pour le Roi; & que les ouvrages nombreux qui sortent de leur mains sont pour la decorations des Maisons royales...en tout ce qui pouvoit servir à la splendeur & à la Magnificence.*"<sup>809</sup> The legal substrate of the furniture-making enterprise was thus one that made the manufacture of material culture an official part of statecraft. The Gobelins artisans were to craft a state of majesty. This meant that whatever advantages they had, they were also firmly under the thumb of the government: the director Le Brun and his boss Colbert, on whose protection the enterprise depended. Le Brun's oversight ensured not only the smooth operation of the manufactory, but equally importantly impressed a homogeneous signature upon the diverse products being made at the Gobelins. It was simpler for artisans at the Gobelins to collaborate with one another than in the city, where guild restrictions and geography made collaboration more complicated. Yet this collaboration and the work of the nearly three hundred artisans employed there (including a very high number of Netherlanders and Italians) had to

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<sup>804</sup> The rise in social status is indicated by the letters patent issued to Comans and de la Planche, which included a noble title, a substantial annual income and an advance of 100,000 livres to set up workshops that they could transfer to their sons when they retire, though they were required to train twenty-five apprentices as a kind of pay-back to France: that was the Crown's price, ensuring a legacy of luxury craft in the Kingdom. Knothe (2016), 35.

<sup>805</sup> Ibid, 27-29.

<sup>806</sup> Cited in *ibid*, 27.

<sup>807</sup> Ibid, 27-29.

<sup>808</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>809</sup> Ibid, 77.

produce a coherent aesthetic in order to project the image of magnificent royal *hegemony*, i.e. Saint-Simon's "tyranny" over nature as represented in this case in the form of furniture made of a diversity of minerals, rock, wood, cloth, and metals, which was nonetheless consistent and coordinated in its design.

Drawings and sketches for designs could thus be passed down from Le Brun's studio top to the various workshops, either to be copied or to serve as a directive guideline. Many of the thousands of drawings by Le Brun today in the French national collection testify to how a signature and singular style was disseminated on paper to the various workshops where it could be realized in objects that made the most of the variety of expertise present on site. Art historians like Thomas Crow have tended to valorize efforts to "resist" this stylistic tyranny and celebrate artists like Antoine Watteau, who Crow sees as subtly working against the dominance of French state style in the silent nuance of his paintings.<sup>810</sup> This narrative privileges individual works of "genius" resistance over collaboration and over art in any form that operated in the service of power.

The manufacturing of a state, however, required both individual expertise and a common project that bound interests together. This project was one that operated in two directions: offering benefits to expert craftsmen *and* to the government. Collaboration and submission to a common aesthetic was understood in this sense to enhance, not detract, from the art of state, and also to form the basis of that state's exceptionalism. The latter quality was apparent both through how the Gobelins operated legally outside of guild strictures as well as in the material variety of the objects the royal manufactory created. If today we valorize acts of artistic resistance, then we risk missing a great deal when considering how an aesthetics of statehood in this period came into being through an integral, coordinated, practice of artistic collaboration. Not resistance, but *cooperation* was the driving force of this production and cooperation is not necessarily synonymous with submission in a negative sense. Interestingly, even after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, most of the protestants at the Gobelins remained there (there was a Flemish protestant prior on site starting in 1680), connected to the manufactory through personal and professional ties that offered enough benefits to make staying to build the state worthwhile.<sup>811</sup> The description of two large cabinets from the Garde-Meuble inventory of March, 1684 – now in Alnwick Castle in England – conveys a sense of the material complexity of the type of stately furniture that the Gobelins artisans were creating,

*372-373 — Deux très grands cabinets d'ébène, ornés dans le milieu d'un portique enrichy de deux tableaux de pierres de relief manière de Florence, entre deux Termes de cuivre doré, dont les chapiteaux sont d'ordre corinthe; aux costez dudit portique, de quatre pilastres de marbre dont les bases et chapiteaux sont pareillement de cuivre doré d'ordre corinthe; au-dessus, d'une attique au milieu de laquelle sont les chiffres du Roy de cuivre doré dans une bordure ronde aussy de cuivre doré, cizelée de fueüilles de laurier, sur la corniche, de trophées d'armes et de six vazes de cuivre doré, et, sur touttela face, de douze autres tableaux de pierres de rapport, aussy manière de Florence,*

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<sup>810</sup> Thomas Crow, "Codes of Silence: Historical Interpretation and the Art of Watteau" in *Representations*, No. 12 (Autumn, 1985), 2-14.

<sup>811</sup> This option, of course, was not available for Formont, as we have seen, or for Testelin who was thrown out of the Academy of painting for being a protestant. But Ferdinand Megliorini's probate inventory from 1683 bears witness to the personal wealth he had amassed working in the *pietra dura* atelier including jewelry, as well as fine and decorative art as an *artisan du roi*. Knothe (2008), 45.

*faits aux Gobelins, représentant des paysages, fleurs et oyseaux et animaux enfermez dans des moulures et ornemens de cuivre doré, portés sur un pied de bois doré, sculpté de pieds de boeuf et de festons; lesdits cabinets haults, avec leur pied, de 7 pieds 5 pouces, larges de 5 pieds 4 pouces, sur 1 pied 1/2 de profondeur. Fait et arrêté à Paris, le 20 mmars 1684.*<sup>812</sup> (Figs 48-49)

Woodwork, marble, gilt, semi-precious stone, copper: furniture like this not only represented the King's state through the lavish showcasing of material plenty, but presented statehood, I am suggesting, as the result of a collaborative project that mobilized different types of expertise to produce something that an individual could not realize alone. Moreover, just as this type of furniture was built to stay in one place, so too did the project of building the state furniture manufactory intend to permanently implant this expertise in French soil through the training of apprentices in craft traditions resettled from abroad (in this case Italy, hence "*manière de Florence*" but made in Paris). International expertise in manufacturing design was not only supposed to produce uniquely French products, but was *made French* itself.

In this constellation of the production of majesty through furniture, the hard stone workshop at the Gobelins was a novelty in France. Colbert and Le Brun established the lapidary studio in 1669, some seven years after the manufactory's founding. From Italy, they brought in several master stone workers: Horace and Ferdinand Migliorini, Filippo Branchi, and Jean Ambrogio Gachetti. These Italian masters of the hard stone work traditions of Florence and Rome supervised a number of French journeymen and apprentices including Antoine Barré, François Chefdeville, André and Jean Dubois, Jean le Tellier, and Claude Louette, as well as the laboring assistants Cheron and Cullot who cut the hardstone mosaic panels.<sup>813</sup> The head lapidaries like Branchi and the Migliorini laid out costs for the semi-precious rocks themselves from specialized purveyors like Pierre Balliot.<sup>814</sup> Their shopping lists record the rising prices of lapis and corals, as well as other supplies; these costs were reimbursed (perhaps not always in a timely fashion) by Colbert – who also clearly paid the stone workers enough to enable them to make purchases for supplies with independence.<sup>815</sup> Presumably, the stoneworkers would have also had access to the Carrara and Rance marble supplies in the King's depots discussed previously. The atelier was an attraction that the crown put on display, much as it displayed the furniture the workshop helped to produce. Le Brun gave foreign delegations personal tours (like the Siamese Embassy in 1686), and Germain Brice's guidebook of 1684 extolled,

The works in inlaid stone were made in a workshop that was previously run by Branquier and Ferdinand de Meliori, who had come from Florence expressly for that type of work, which was still unknown in these regions. The entire composition was of precious stones, of different agates, or carnelians, jade, jasper, lapis lazuli, and other sorts, with which they fashioned landscapes, birds, flowers, and fruit, and which were used to decorate cabinets of tabletops.<sup>816</sup>

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<sup>812</sup> Entry 372-373 in *Inventaire général du mobilier de la Couronne sous Louis XIV (1663-1715) Partie 2 / publié... sous les auspices de la Société d'encouragement pour la propagation des livres d'art*, Jules Guiffrey, ed. (Paris: Au Siège de la Société, 1886), 160 -162.

<sup>813</sup> Knothe (2016), 139.

<sup>814</sup> Ibid, 146.

<sup>815</sup> Knothe (2008), 45.

<sup>816</sup> Cited in *ibid*, 42.

Brice uses the Frenchified names of the craftsmen, reiterating the idea that their work had become French, though at the same time it was both a novel and foreign attraction.

In Italy, tables made of *pietra dura* had a grand pedigree. Spectacular marble tables, in particular, were (and are still) littered around baroque Italian palaces, testifying to the wealth, grandiose tastes, and classical predilections of their former owners.<sup>817</sup> In the *cinquecento*, recently unearthed ancient Roman archeological sites had revealed marble floors and wall inlays (*opus sectile*) filled with inventive classical geometric stone mosaic modules in endlessly varied patterns, as well as figurative motifs, of the kind we will discuss later.<sup>818</sup> These served as inspirations to artists and architects like Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola, who designed the Farnese family's famous marble table.<sup>819</sup> (Fig. 51) In a culture eager to draw upon Antiquity as a source to define identity, culture, and intellectual sophistication, Roman *opus sectile* provided desirable source material. Vignola's table mobilized both the ancient technique and Antique ornament alongside more contemporary motifs (like the Farnese coat of arms) in ways that interwove the family into an illustrious historical continuum.<sup>820</sup> The obviously weighty marble table rooted them, physically and metaphorically, in Rome. By the seventeenth century, no guidebook to Rome or description of the Farnese palace failed to mention the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Farnese Table.<sup>821</sup>

This object (and other similarly lauded precious table tops) launched the rebirth of stately precious stone inlay craft in the Renaissance that came to be known as *commesso* work (from the Latin *committere*, meaning to put together, or unite), or *pietra dura* (hard stone). The technique became increasingly popular in Baroque courts, first in southern Europe and then in the North, where they were equally beloved, for example, by Rudolph II in Prague, where Boèce de Boot wrote his treatise on stones and the “perfect jeweler”.<sup>822</sup> In 1588 Lorenzo de' Medici had founded a workshop in Florence (the *Opificio delle pietre dure* in the *Galerie dei Lavori*) to produce these types of furniture *cum* works of art on a regular basis for his court. The Florentine models tended toward figuration, in contradistinction to the Roman examples, which tend to be recognizable by a fascination with geometric patterns and optical games with depth and surface. (Figs. 52-53) Instead of imitating classical ornament and *opus sectile*, Florentine hard stone craftsmen brilliantly displayed their know-how by deploying precious and semi-precious stones in ways that used the color and patterns in the stones to portray landscapes, portraits, or still lifes: the oscillation between the abstract, objective qualities of the rocks and the mimetic patterns that they formed drew attention both to the makers' skill as well as to the play between nature and artifice so popular in the cabinets of curiosities and *Kunstkammern* of Baroque European elites.<sup>823</sup> (Fig. 54) These were objects to be displayed and admired, as much for the skill of the artisans who made them as for the wit and refinement of the wealthy patrons who

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<sup>817</sup> See the collected essays in *Art of the Royal Court*, Koeppe, ed. (2008) and Anna Maria Giusti, *Arte delle Pietre Dure* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2006).

<sup>818</sup> See e.g. Giusti “Roman Inlay and Florentine Mosaics: The New Art of Pietra Dura” in Koeppe, ed. (2008), 12-27.

<sup>819</sup> See Raggio, op. cit.

<sup>820</sup> Ibid.

<sup>821</sup> Ibid, 214.

<sup>822</sup> Giusti (2008), 16-20.

<sup>823</sup> The literature on cabinets of curiosity is vast. On Pietra Dura and collecting, see the essays and catalogue entries collected in Koeppe, ed. (2008) as well as, paradigmatically on the *Kunstkammer*, Horst Bredekamp, *The Lure of Antiquity and the Cult of the Machine: The Kunstammer and the Evolution of Nature, Art, and Technology*, trans. A. Brown (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1995) and Lorraine Daston & Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York: MIT Press/Zone Books, 1998) as well as Mouquin (2012) on early modern collections of rocks and minerals.

commissioned them.<sup>824</sup> In the case of the Medici table we briefly discussed in the previous section of this chapter which featured a view of the newly built Livorno harbor, the table also laid a claim to power over trading routes and the sea.

Richelieu and Mazarin (Italian by birth) after him both were deeply besotted with Italian art, well aware of its social cachet and value as part of a display of magnificence and wealth.<sup>825</sup> We have briefly considered Richelieu's centerpiece Italian table at his chateau in Limousin, with its giant agate roundel. Mazarin was equally hungry for marble encrusted objects. At some point prior to 1661, for example, he acquired a spectacular example of Florentine *pietra dura* work now at the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris which loosely celebrates the Christian victory over the Ottomans at Lepanto in 1571. (Fig. 55) The object was made at the Florentine *Galleria dei Lavori* around 1602 (thirty years after the naval battle) and offers an example of Florentine work that we can contrast with what would develop later at the Gobelins into a "French" style of "*pierres de rapport*" inlay. The Lepanto table features a decorative band circling its perimeter, which contains a mix of trophies including flags sporting the Ottoman crescent like those that bedecked the Sultan's galleys at Lepanto.<sup>826</sup> Signs of the four elements are interspersed with these trophies and festoons of arms, as are representations of lapis vases in each corner, from which extends a bouquet of detailed blossoms into the center of the table, beyond the martially coded border frieze (these include the "Turk's-cap lily" and the "turban lily"). In the image's center, more flowers are strewn about, appearing alongside a colorful and spectacularly rendered swarm of swallows, butterflies and other flying insects, most of which carry small blooms, fruits and branches in their claws and beaks. In the center of the table is a ducal crown surrounding the stem of multicolored *Iris Fiorentina*. It could be, as Wolfram Koeppe has suggested, that the iris/crown combination refers to the marriage of Maria de Medici and Henry IV, with the iris doubling as a fleur-de-lys. In this case, the object could be loosely allegorically read as presenting Christian unity (also implying victory over the Turks) as an (elemental) martial victory presaging the fruits and blooms of abundance and peace being delivered by the songbirds and butterflies to the table's center on the occasion of a diplomatic alliance. Mazarin's acquisition would have paralleled the "import" of Marie de Medici from Italy to France in the form of a Medici product.

These sorts of loose and associative readings, together with a celebration of the marriage of stone with naturally playful and "artistic" forms like flowers and butterflies (*lusus naturae*), lay at the heart of the Florentine tradition.<sup>827</sup> Often, as in another example of a *pietra dura* table, designed by Jacopo Ligozzi and assembled by Jacopo Autelli now in the Uffizi, a world of exuberant abundance is strewn clear across the table's top. (Fig. 56) Precisely rendered tendrils and blossoms form a thick web of interlocking forms and colors that undulate in all senses, seeming to thwart scrutiny through sheer copiousness.<sup>828</sup> Nature appears to have rendered itself in all of its plenty on top of the table, which encourages the table's beholder to circle the object in a continuously unfolding search for wondrous surprises. At the center, a victor's laurel wreath is barely detectable amidst the plethora of visual business, perhaps indicating that the combination of patron and artist form a triumphant team of masters who have conquered the challenge of representing nature's most delicate fruits in hard stone while also bewitching the

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<sup>824</sup> Giusti (2008).

<sup>825</sup> See Michel (1999).

<sup>826</sup> Koeppe in Koeppe, ed. (2008), cat. 45, 182-184.

<sup>827</sup> Giusti (2008), 16-20.

<sup>828</sup> See Giusti in Koeppe, ed. (2008), cat. 38, 171-172.

beholder who falls under the table's (and their) mimetic spell. The aesthetic range of these objects was thus broad, encompassing familial, diplomatic, and historical nuances as well as – particularly in the work of Ligozzi – a specific interest in exacting representations of flora, fauna, and bedazzling visual trickery.<sup>829</sup>

Mazarin's table ended up being purchased by Colbert, who was the driving force behind the establishment of the lapidary workshop at the Gobelins. It was perhaps after either Mazarin's or Colbert's purchase that a set of four cast bronze dolphins were added to the table as piers at the object's base. (Fig. 57) The dolphins clearly reference the French "dauphin" and thereby mark the shift of the geographical locus of power conveyed by the object away from Italy to France. This shift paralleled the itinerary of the Italian craftsmen who Colbert and Mazarin before him had brought to France in order to produce these kinds of objects locally. These included not only the *pietra dura* masters noted above, but also skilled carpenters and metal-workers who could manufacture elements like the dolphin piers. Marble table tops were very heavy. They practically wore their weight on their sleeve. In order to respond to the challenge of keeping them aloft, strong supports needed to be erected and the high value of the top governed the quality of the supports. These could be either freestanding, or attached to a wall. They were comprised of lavish gilded woodwork, usually forming a frieze under the table's top. This frieze was reinforced structurally by a cross-stretcher towards the bottom, which culminated in a "nut" or *cassolette* in the center (under the marble top), which could take the elaborate form of a putto, a trophy of arms, doves and branches, or any number of other motifs.<sup>830</sup> (Fig. 58) Like a 16<sup>th</sup>-century English long table, each element of the support was carved and attended to in order to ensure the maximum production of *éclat* and sparkle. Each curve took the glittering candlelight differently, maximizing the dispersal of reflected glimmers of gold and silver into space. As in the painting previously discussed of Louis standing next to a marble table, the aesthetic of the supports was classicizing, incorporating Antique elements into a French present in a manner that connected the various media of the object and gave it structural integrity. In the description of the ornate Alnwick cabinets above taken from the royal inventory, it is striking how architectural the body of this object is, including columns and porticos. They were an odd combination of colossal, if thought of as furniture, and miniature, if thought of as architecture. In this sense, they have the character of models: they model an architecture of state and a stately architecture that has been domesticated for display.

The metalwork and woodwork on the cabinets and similar tables played not only a supporting role, but added significantly to the "bling" factor of the stone. The most well-known and prolific maker of these elements in the Crown's furniture was a Roman (born in Todi in 1640) named Domenico Cucci.<sup>831</sup> Mazarin must have brought this wood and metal worker to Paris before 1660 and in 1664 he married the gilder Paul Goujon's daughter. In the same year he became naturalized as French and his name changed to Dominique.<sup>832</sup> Cucci was already active at the Gobelins in 1662, as well as at Versailles where he worked on the balustrades of the Staircase of the Ambassadors and various interior decorations in the *appartements des bains*, where the giant Rance tub was installed. In the Alnwick cabinets, Cucci's sculptural support

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<sup>829</sup> See *ibid* and on Ligozzi, see Baader, 150-152.

<sup>830</sup> Verlet (1967), 117-118.

<sup>831</sup> The Neapolitan Philippe Caffieri was another prolific woodworker, who produced numerous table supports together with the gilder Paul Goujon de la Baronnière, according to designs by Le Brun. Knothe (2016), 129-139 and Mabile, 72-82.

<sup>832</sup> On Cucci, see Mabile, 75.

work is on full display. Ebony is deployed in subtle strips that provide a contrast with the exuberant gilt carvings of floral swags and shells that hang to the “*pieds de boeuf*” on which the ensemble stands. Cucci’s structural “support” work is able to unify the riot of color and material facture under medallions that top the cabinets, which feature the King’s monogram of two interwoven capital “L”s.<sup>833</sup> (Fig.59)

One could say, in light of my earlier suggestion about the state and collaboration, that the architecture of the cabinet is *overseen* by Louis’ presence, perched above. On the other hand, one could also argue that it is the collaborative force of this furniture, with its diverse materials and the wide range of coordinated expertise necessary to produce it that supported the “Sun” in its roundel and enabled it to gleam magnificently: the magnificence of the King relied on high quality buttressing. This quality was due in large part to the establishment of the royal manufactories. For example, because Cucci enjoyed royal privileges at the Gobelins, he could unfold the full range of his skills as a sculptor, *menuisier*, *ébéniste*, and a bronze founder. Because he was there, he could also collaborate with the lapidary craftsmen, the fruits of whose labors are mounted on the cabinets’ exteriors: images of nature’s bounty in the form of fauna and flora *manière de Florence*. Florian Knothe has remarked upon how in objects like these produced at the Gobelins, the royal symbolism is only obviously apparent in Cucci’s wood and metal work. There is a seeming lack of a comprehensive iconographic program. The *pietra dura* panels are somewhat odd in that they appear not to have been made according to an overarching scheme, but rather to have been mounted on the cabinet because they fit its empty panels. Yet one might hazard a suggestion that it was the very domestication and cultivation of *familiarity* and *collaboration* between these foreign artisans all working together at the live-work setup that the Crown provided at the Gobelins which in fact was on display: the “iconography” was less important than the objects’ extremely varied materiality and workmanship. These qualities offered their own iconography of sorts: the *singularity* of the object produced collaboratively depends (paradoxically) on coordinated *multiplicity*, a state(ly) and unrivaled harnessing of material expertise into one body.

This notion would have dovetailed well with contemporary theories of absolutism as a means of establishing social and political order and balance – physical qualities inherent in furniture like tables and large *stipi*, whose structural integrity depends on constructed equilibrium. For Jean Bodin, writing before the paradigm of the Bourbon *état* established itself, sovereignty was to be an active and ordering will, one which shaped a “heterogeneous mass” into a form.<sup>834</sup> Difference, indeed, was in many respects the cornerstone of absolutist political theology, as well as its political economy. Social divisions constituted the basis of a community and also were the foundation of the very notion of representation itself. The Sun King’s instructions to his son in his memoirs remind us of this. Louis, for example, describes various professions, each of whom has an essential social role to play, no matter where they find themselves on the social ladder. It is the merchant, for instance, who, “by his cares assembles from a thousand different places all the useful and pleasant products of the world in order to furnish them to each individual whenever he needs them.”<sup>835</sup> The merchant thus performs a key

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<sup>833</sup> Knothe (2008), 47.

<sup>834</sup> Nannerl Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France: The Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 71.

<sup>835</sup> Keohane writes of Louis’ political thinking as manifested in the memoirs to his son, “We find occasionally in his writings the old-fashioned notion of justice as the maintenance of harmonious proportion among several parts of the society, merging with a more novel notion of the functional contributions by each part to the bustling productivity of the whole.” See *ibid*, 247-248.



social function, without which the social order would not function: he is assigned a place in the hierarchy between the peasant and the artisan, the financier, the magistrates and the clergy, as intellectual historian Nannerl Keohane writes. “Each profession contributes in its own way to sustaining monarchy... This is why, far from scorning any of these conditions or raising one at the expense of the others, we must take care to make them all, if possible, exactly what they should be.”<sup>836</sup> In the *Pensées*, Pascal would write that each of these roles were crucial, yet it was essential that they be ordered under a single organizing force (akin, in the case of the Gobelins, to the imperatives formulated by the triad of Le Brun-Colbert-Louis XIV), “If the feet and hands each had a *volonté particulière*, they would never be properly in order except in submitting this particular will to the *colonté première* that governs the whole body. Without this they are in disorder and misfortune, but in willing solely the good of the body they work for their own good.”<sup>837</sup> This concern with ordering difference is arguably the unspoken iconographic program of the furniture produced at the Gobelins between the professional *pietra dura* masters and the professional *ébénistes*, sculptors, and metal experts. Each had a role to play. And in Cucci’s and the lapidary’s furnishings, each played their virtuoso role with *bravura*.<sup>838</sup>

That *furniture* was mobilized to convey this ideology of absolutist order is also not coincidental. Absolutist political theory made the family unit and the home the nucleus of society: the Sovereign was father to the Kingdom and all of its families, and within each family unit, each father was sovereign. In that fashion, order was preserved up and down the social ladder, under the patriarchal figure of the *pater familias*. As Keohane observes, to seminal French theorists of sovereignty like Bodin, “the family was not only the focal point for human affection and nurture, but also the locus for the possession of property and for the exercise of natural paternal authority. The family was like a little state, the state a larger family; and the order of his Commonwealth required that the patterns of authority and subordination in the one be faithfully imitated in the other.”<sup>839</sup> The furnishing of the King’s home, thus, can be seen as a model for the furnishing of all homes. It was inimitable by design, but at the same time, it provided an ideal showcase for the sentiment that the unification of a *diversity* of professions and classes is integral to making a state great, just as a diversity of professions is necessary to make great and unique furniture. Each home has its table, but the King’s unique table and his unique home encompasses *all* the homes of the land, who support him just as he supports them through his skilled *ménagement* of French resources. It might at first seem odd that Colbert’s goal to generate wealth through the *export* of French luxury resulted in the establishment of an outfit (the Gobelins) that provided material goods *only* for the Crown. Yet by domesticating foreign labor and generating traditions of craft and expertise in France, the hope was that innovation and quality craftsmanship that would reproduce themselves locally over time and generate financial

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<sup>836</sup> Cited in *ibid*, 247-48.

<sup>837</sup> Cited in *ibid*, 279.

<sup>838</sup> The same was true for the royal palaces as larger ensembles. Monicart writes of the *salon octogone* at Versailles (also called *cabinet des mois*), “Considere, Passant, ce curieux Salon, ainsi que ce riche plafond fait d’une octogone figure. L’or, le métal doré, le marbre & la peinture brillent de toutes parts, & leur riche façon au magnifique, au grand au bon gout répond: Les chambranles, bandeaux, des fenêtres, des portes sont tous faits de marbres choisis: blanc & couleur de feu, mais des plus belles sortes que le chaud Languedoc produit dans son pays...” Cited in Mouquin (2018), 283. Monicart highlights how each aspect of one ensemble is “answerable” to the whole, to the dominating will of the design. In this case, the sculpted figures are made according to a design by Le Brun, executed by a team of nine sculptors, including Jean-Baptiste Tubby who worked at the Gobelins.

<sup>839</sup> Keohane, 69.

rewards. The production of one-of-a-kind furniture was to benefit not only the King, but the state as a whole, in each and every *oikos*.

*Animal Embellishments and the Social Grammar of ‘Compartiments’*

Thinking about furniture as a manifestation of political ideology in this manner provides an unexpectedly useful interpretive filter through which to understand the “Frenchification” of Italian models in the *pietra dura* tabletop compositions themselves. As we have observed, the Italian models of stone inlay tables tended to sprawl. They were “all-over” compositions that writhed and spread in all directions. Even when they featured borders prominently—as in the *veduta* of Livorno with its spectacular agate perimeter rim—the bordering served to set off the explosive and evocative qualities of the stone. (Fig. 60) The tables which came to characterize the Gobelins style developed for Versailles were entirely different in their effect. In the expressive words of Vincent Cochet, “France responded to the debauchery of marble polychromes that public or private Italian edifices harbored with a certain restraint.”<sup>840</sup> Descriptions of hardstone tables in the general inventory of furniture at Versailles often highlight a French interest in borders as an ordering force for marble objects. Entry twelve in the section of the Versailles furniture inventory for tables and cabinets reads, for example, “*Une table de pierre de paragon parsemée de branches, fueüillages, fleurs, fruits et oyseaux d’amatiste, cornaline, jade, lapis, agathes et autres pierres fines de Florence, à l’entour de laquelle règne un listel de marbre blanc entre deux fillets de marbre rouge*”. Here, the frequently used word (in the inventory) “reins/reigns” is deployed to describe not one but two borders that “net” (*fillets*) the flowers, fruits, birds, and leaves of the table’s mosaic.<sup>841</sup> When the King ordered marble tables, he often specified the fabrication of metal borders to contain them, e.g. an order to the tune of 900 livres to Cucci for “the 7 golden bronze table borders he made for the tables that came from Italy.”<sup>842</sup>

The wild explosions of bewitching flora and fauna we saw in Italian examples of marble work tend to be “ruled” in by borders that divide the French tables from the spaces that surrounds them and also – frequently – also divide the plane of the table into small compartments (*compartiments*) as in the case of a remarkable set of Gobelins’ designs produced for the King’s menagerie in Versailles’ gardens. (Figs. 61-64) Analyzing these designs offers a means of expanding our exploration of how objects like these tables served as an ordering force in the palace; like scientific tables, they operated in a zone between visibility and legibility, as I will suggest in the following. They also participated in broadcasting an ideology of a *state* of order predicated upon reining difference under the yoke of a uniform (decorative) scheme. As we have seen above, a unified body of social divisions constituted the basis of the absolutist state. This idea reiterated itself in the type of ornamentation developed at the Gobelins for marble tables, as well as in the marble floors and walls designed by Le Brun and later Hardouin-Mansart at Versailles.

Certain tables made at the Gobelins were produced for specific places, like a hard stone piece from ca. 1670 now at the Louvre, which was made for the menagerie.<sup>843</sup> (Fig.65) The table is not terribly large (less than a meter on each side) but it is filled with details. A black band runs

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<sup>840</sup> Cochet, 37.

<sup>841</sup> Jules Guiffrey, ed., entry 12 page 131, emphasis mine.

<sup>842</sup> Ibid, tome II, col. 888, cited Cochet, 36.

<sup>843</sup> Knothe (2016), 143.

around its perimeter, flanked by a green border encrusted with small white decorative flourishes disposed at regular intervals. This green border also demarcates sets of regularly disposed compartments: on the shorter table sides there are three and on the longer sides four. Each is clearly defined by the meandering green band which divides the compartments while also drawing them together. In the table's center, one sees the crown of France atop a golden escutcheon filled with three fleur-de-lys on a lapis ground. Laurel leaves emerge from this golden Crown, each leaf clearly defined against the black stone ground. Unlike the Italian table designed by Ligozzi described above, the laurel leaves do not swirl and curl into an undulating mass. Instead, each individual leaf is posed against the ground in a manner that make every one distinctly visible; the foliage also only extends obediently to the green meander which encloses the central rectangle. The docility and visibility of the leaves finds a visual and logical echo in the green meander, which is also entirely visible and manifests neither resistance nor playful visual conceit (it neither twists nor turns). It dutifully intertwines the corners of all the smaller surrounding compartments, which are also all easy to see and read. It is a flat, graphic force that serves as a unifying factor drawing each element of the table together into a coherent form whose legibility is facilitated by the division of space into consistently disposed and regularly shaped compartments. These compartments are scaled to emphasize a social hierarchy through formal means. The center is the largest, with the crown, while the four corner compartments, which are also large, contain further ciphers of the king, with crowns and his signature of interlaced double 'L's. The King's markers thus occupy the center and the table's edges so that the "reign" reins in the object quite literally.

The other six panels, which are smaller, all present landscape scenes with birds. The birds are not exotic, but domestic and surprisingly plain for a *pietra dura* object. These are neither strange and wondrous creatures, with colorful plumes, nor are they the falcons and hunting birds so beloved by Louis' father; they are also not large, stately, migrating birds like storks and cranes, nor are they the gracious swans cultivated as decoration for Paris' rivers by the Sun King.<sup>844</sup> They are barnyard animals, perched and exposed in the center of relatively domesticated landscapes so that the birds, like the table's laurel leaves, are easy to discern and inspect. (Figs. 66-67)

Numerous drawings for hard stone tables that must have come from Le Brun's studio resemble this design; one includes animals like a rabbit and a fox, along with a duck; another features a rooster and a duck; while two others do include exotic macaws alongside more average French fowl, as well as the Goddess of the hunt, Diana. There is little, however, in most of these designs of the *drama* associated with hunting. There is no narrative crescendo or hide-and-seek. The disposition of the intertwined compartments itself seems more aligned with an ordering process than anything else, since the animals in each panel are placed inside of small squares front and central so that they are easy to view. Since each panel is the same size, they are also easy to compare with one another. The animals, therefore, are not being hunted down, but rather collected - albeit not according to a clear organizing principle. Thus while the technique remains the same as in the Italian examples, as does the interest in flora and fauna, both the types of animals that appear and the ways in which their appearances are organized into an interlocking but fragmented, geometrically disposed ornamental whole are entirely different. What are we to make of this fixation on domestic birds and their rendering in this highly

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<sup>844</sup> We will discuss fashions in birds more fully later. On importing swans to the Seine, see Joan deJean, *The Essence of Style: How the French Invented High Fashion, Fine Food, Chic Cafés, Style, Sophistication, and Glamour* (New York: Free Press, 2005), 5.

compartmentalized manner in the medium of stone? Peter Sahlins has recently shown the key role that animals and the menagerie played in Louis XIV's court where they served as a kind of model of the "civilizing process" (Norbert Elias).<sup>845</sup> The conclusions that Sahlins draws provide us with an analytical line for dealing with the Gobelins' hard stone designs and what I would term the grammar of social ornament they convey.

### *All Birds of One Feather*

The menagerie was one of the earliest construction projects at Versailles, begun in 1662 when Louis had assumed the reins of power on his own upon Mazarin's death. An earlier animal park had been built at Vincennes while the cardinal was alive. This theater of animals was constructed along Italianate lines and was designed to showcase animal fights and the dog-eat-dog ferocity of wild beasts, focusing the spectator's attention *inward* on a colosseum-like interior oval arena in which the battles took place.<sup>846</sup> (Fig. 68) The menagerie at Versailles, however, inverted the open violence of the Vincennes project, wherein species were pitted against one another as if in a battle to the death akin to a Hobbesian state of nature. In the panoptic Versailles zoo, which consisted of a domed, *outward-looking*, octagonal pavilion, ringed with an iron balcony that allowed visitors to gaze into seven animal courtyards, a premium was placed instead on distanced, calm observation. The tower resembled a kind of observatory itself, from which one could gaze at the animals from above peacefully; one looked outward instead of inward as in the earlier Vincennes circus. The beasts were no longer "inside", but outside to be gazed at as if one were looking at them in a landscape instead of a fighting ring. Paintings by a Flemish student of Frans Snyders named Nicasiaus Bernaerts lined the interior's window frames, putting the birds on display two-fold. Scudéry noted about the paintings that they were there "as if to prepare what will be seen, or as a remembrance of what was seen."<sup>847</sup> Unlike Snyder's animal combats, Bernaert's works for Versailles prioritized distanced viewing and peaceful cohabitation among the species, as in a panel showing various types of spotted hens and roosters sauntering around instead of pecking each other to death. (Figs. 69-70) Following Scudéry, one would say that this peaceful strutting is what viewers were both intended to see and to remember from their experience of the menagerie as a whole: a diverse, but peaceful social interspecies ensemble.

Birds constituted by far the majority of the menagerie's dwellers. Versailles had a *cour des belles poules* (beautiful chickens), a *cour de la volière* (courtyard with a birdcage for small and exotic flying birds), the *cour des pelicans*, a *cour du rondeau* (courtyard with a basin), and a *basse-cour* which was the barnyard court.<sup>848</sup> Here a panoply of birds resided including exotic specimens as well as familiar domestic types, spanning migratory birds who passed through France as well as the usual cast of farmyard characters. (Fig. 71) There were swans, storks, egrets, herons, cranes, flamingos, as well as cormorants, sandpipers, pelicans, seagulls, ostriches, guinea fowl, African spoonbills, graylag geese, the crown-crested cranes (the King of them all),

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<sup>845</sup> "We can identify the literary representations of the menagerie's animals within the linked "civilizing process," as conceptualized by Norbert Elias, in which standards of violence, sexual behavior, and bodily functions increasingly repress instinctual drives and produce the emotions of shame and repugnance". Peter Sahlins, *1668: The Year of the Animal in France* (New York: Zone Books, 2017), 94.

<sup>846</sup> Ibid, 54-76. On animals and absolutism, see also Margaret Carroll, *Painting and Politics in Northern Europe: Van Eyck, Bruegel, Rubens, and Their Contemporaries* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2008), 162-184.

<sup>847</sup> Cited Sahlins, 72-74.

<sup>848</sup> Ibid, 74.

the elegant demoiselle cranes from Numidia (the star of Versailles), hens, geese, roosters, partridges, turkeys, quail, parakeets, finch, cotinga (humming birds), Muscovy ducks, sultan chickens, mergansers, Canada geese, cassowaries, shelducks, West Indian whistling ducks, pigeons, Northern shovelers, and more.<sup>849</sup> Falcons were noticeably absent, though there were other carnivores like an eagle, a sparrow hawk, and a great horned owl.<sup>850</sup> The mobility associated with the sport of falconry would have contradicted the paradigm of the display. Most birds had their wings clipped so that they could not escape, even though aside from the *voilière*, there were not cages with roofs. Sometimes the birds were combined with other animals, which themselves were in cages, like mongoose, foxes, or a porcupine. Clipped wings meant the birds' bodies themselves were transformed into a covert cage (one might say, a *grand habit*), and that the entire display was ensemble was predicated upon *immobilization*, a formal effect echoed in Le Brun's table designs where the birds are all grounded and exposed. As Sahlins notes, the volume of birds must have made a huge din, and there must have been numerous bloody conflicts and fights to the death, not least with the irascible cassowary. Yet visitors to the menagerie like Mlle de Scudéry, or even the police commissary Nicolas de La Mare tended to highlight the peaceful nature of the birds, the latter noting that "each species is happy and finds itself as if in its natural milieu."<sup>851</sup> Clearly this was not the case, but it was obviously the intended effect.

Foucault likened the Versailles menagerie to the "great confinement" that took place under Louis XIV at the Salpêtrière in Paris in 1656; both the hospital and the zoo become sites of imprisonment and the disciplining of bodies in his reading.<sup>852</sup> Yet as Sahlins observes, the menagerie did not separate the mad and the poor from the graceful and the exotic. Instead, it domesticated the exotic and the wonderful by clipping their wings and combining them with local and familiar species. The "foreign" birds became assimilated into a visual vocabulary of their French homologues, not unlike the Italian *pietra dura* workers who became "naturalized" as French. There was not a systematic collecting program (many animals were gifts as well as acquisitions). Rather, the menagerie served to stage a theater of civilized sociability, which was intended to be understood as analogous to the court itself (there were two further aviaries in the heart of the palace in the *cour du marbre*, with gilt ironwork and sculpted marble interiors).<sup>853</sup> The menagerie gathered *all* types of animals and presented them in a natural state of happy dwelling (de La Mare's "natural milieu") that had attempted to mitigate associations with war and conflict. A kind of harmonious diversity was prioritized instead, albeit one predicated upon framing the animals in compartments from which they could not escape: a golden cage, like a palace in which the "wings" of courtiers – their independence – were clipped and submitted to an unrelenting seen-and-be-seen protocol.

The emphasis on birds was connected to a widespread appreciation of avian creatures in seventeenth-century. They frequently appear in French *gallant* literature and salon contexts in which they serve as metaphors for freedom, delicacy, and beauty. The highest animals (literally), birds were believed to be able to repress their desires, to embody grace and beauty, and to act with reason.<sup>854</sup> Like civilized humans, birds were thought to be capable of sublimating their

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<sup>849</sup> Ibid, 74-75.

<sup>850</sup> Ibid.

<sup>851</sup> Cited in *ibid*, 79.

<sup>852</sup> Ibid, 78.

<sup>853</sup> Ibid, 88.

<sup>854</sup> Ibid, 87-90.

violent urges and cohabiting together in a kind of graceful dance that included, in the menagerie, birds of all feathers. In short: the variety of birds joined together in the zoo demonstrated characteristics that were considered desirable for the state as an orderly *mesnage* (household). Animality was no longer to be associated in this new *therophilic* paradigm with older *therophobic* Renaissance fear of the beast within. Instead, animals were to be praised: “there is nothing more beautiful than a menagerie that is well-ordered and peaceful,” wrote Pierre Charon in his *De la sagesse* (1604).<sup>855</sup>

As Sahlins observes, Charon is referring to the *oikos* of the home, but the “menagerie” can also be transposed to the situation set of at the Versailles zoo as a metaphor for a peaceful, bountiful state that is well-managed – in the same way that the state control of stone, water, and wood found an ideological base predicated upon the “wisdom of the male *ménager* who measures, judges, and manages the farm.”<sup>856</sup> Instead of a model of sovereignty based on the forceful monopolization of violence in order to tame the wild passions of the animal-like humans that constitute a republic, the sovereign-*mesnager* is one who mobilizes male expertise to manage and control them. Tamed and immobilized animals become models of behavior, rather than an example of behaviors to avoid.

The development of this new paradigm in which animals and barnyards modeled an ideal state in the double sense of a Kingdom and a state-of-being was, in France, a phenomenon of the 1660s. This was the same period in which Louis and Colbert’s mercantilist policies were first being implemented, including the establishment of the Gobelins in the very same year as work on the menagerie began (1662). Objects like the Louvre table conjoined these two intertwined developments. On the one hand, it represented the development of French industry in the field of luxury furniture production – one might say a polishing of French skilled labor. On the other, it served not only as an illustration of animals at the menagerie, but a kind of material iteration of the civilizing process that the menagerie staged. One is reminded of the quote by Desmarests de Saint-Sorlin previously cited on the subject of stone in the previously:

*Il faut chercher ce qu’il y a de plus riche dans la Nature & lui donner la perfection par le secours de l’art. L’or, l’argent, les marbres & les pierres précieuses ne sont pas des choses guère plus précieuses que la terre même, si l’art ne les polit, & ne leur donne l’éclat et le lustre, & l’homme même qui est chef d’oeuvre de la nature, ne diffère guère des bêtes s’il ne se polit pas par le travail & par l’étude.*<sup>857</sup>

Skill, observation, study, and art is what makes man special, what enables the “natural” in man and the world around him to become artful and civilized. Like the expert *mesnager*, the expert craftsman is able to see *into* the unworked treasures of the earth and coax their inherent, but otherwise unrefined, value from them with his *savoir-faire*. He thereby also cultivates himself, separating himself from base nature in order to transform into something polished, in the sense of both polished and polite, qualities manifest in the fruits of his labor as well as in Versailles’ courtiers, who were *polis* as well. De Saint-Sorlin was writing a decade before the *therophilic* movement gained traction, hence his emphasis on what still separates man from beast. In our context of the menagerie and the Gobelins avian table, however, art and refinement are what

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<sup>855</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>856</sup> Sahlins, 61.

<sup>857</sup> Cited in Mouquin, “Pour Dieu et Le Roi (2012), 167.

connect man and “beast”. Both are incorporated into a civilizing process, which stages itself materially on the table’s top, just as the birds staged civility in the menagerie.

The technique of *pietre dura* is itself a process of double refinement. It demands, as Hannah Baader has written, working “both with the material and against it.”<sup>858</sup> The process of hard stone inlay proceeds in several stages. The first step is to make a drawing, which is then cut into smaller pieces. These pieces are then used as patterns that are translated into stone, which in a second step is cut and then assembled. The first stage of *pietre dura*, therefore, involves the transformation of the environment (landscape, bird, foliage) into a drawing. The second involves the transformation of stone (an environmental element) into that same drawing in a manner that takes advantage of the inherent chromatic and ornamental qualities of polished rock. In Baader’s words, this demands two distinct ways of seeing: “into” the stone, on a micro level, and seeing “from above” in the sense of keeping an eye on the whole ensemble in order to ensure that all the details cohere.<sup>859</sup> The qualities of individual types of material must be recognized and encouraged to unfold so that they might contribute to an overarching vision that brings them together in a fashion that is pleasing, unified, and civilized in the sense that they all coexist and glitter together as integral parts of a single shiny surface. When this surface is a tabletop, it is actually raised above the ground, offering a view that itself stages the process of separation and polishing of the “earth” (stone) for the viewer’s delectation.

In the Louvre table, these modes of seeing are incorporated into an ideology of statehood both visually and materially. The Crown’s ciphers oversee the earth below: they mark the table’s space and the stone itself like signatures scrawled by someone leaning over a surface. They visualize the ground/table “from above”, from the perspective of a birds-eye view. The barnyard birds themselves, however, shift the perspective. They are embedded in landscapes and we see them from the side, as if we were encountering them on the farm. Only the stone birds are still; they are immobilized like the birds in the menagerie. This is what allows us to inspect them and wonder at their qualities as both animals and art. Thus, it is through the artful overview, with its keen sense of an overarching structure of unity, that these “lowly” *poules* reveal themselves as having been recognized as valuable and rendered artful through the skill of the stone workers. They are developed visually with the same care that a good *mesnager* should give to his farm animals to make them plump and tasty: a concern for the well-being of the entire social ensemble that is grounded upon a keen eye for detail and cultivation of individual characteristics and traits.<sup>860</sup> Even the lowliest chicken has something important to offer. In a sense, the *artisan du roi* replays the role of the King while making work for the monarch. For the artist stages his know-how and skill in managing his materials and presenting an ideally artful vision of the environment around him. He renders that environment more magnificent and polished than before, just as the King renders his state more magnificent through the cultivation of resources, human, animal, and natural. Each helps the other to rise and shine, just as the tabletop rises above the ground to create a visual and physical platform around which people can gather in order to witness the civilizing process that the table makes manifest.

It is no coincidence that the menagerie was, therefore, also used as a banqueting space, for banqueting was an event at Versailles that put these social dynamics on display and the zoo offered an apt and loaded backdrop. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the performance of eating *à table* was a key channel through which European seventeenth-century civility discourse

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<sup>858</sup> Baader, 155. On the technique of *pietra dura* technique, see especially Giusti (2005).

<sup>859</sup> Ibid.

<sup>860</sup> Sahlins, 61.

became embodied. Swords cast aside in order to mitigate the threat of violence, individual plates and forks highlighting the boundaries of an individual's personal space, a code of manners ruling the ensemble of diners: each of these elements was intended to foster a sense of peaceful sociability (Louis did not allow his relatives to use forks or sharp knives at his dinner table).<sup>861</sup> The table raised from the ground hid unruly, base lower body parts from view. The tabletop served as both a physical plane and a conceptual, moral tissue of commonly accepted rules of decorum and comportment.

By the 1660s, a shift in eating habits reiterated the discourse of civilized manners and etiquette. By then, the types of regal migratory birds that had previously populated royal banqueting tables like cranes, peacocks, storks, and swans had disappeared from courtly banquets. They were replaced instead with less exotic, but more tender fare: chickens, *poulardes* from Mans, and capons, followed in popularity by ducks and pigeons (accompanied by Louis' beloved simple green peas, which were all the rage at Versailles).<sup>862</sup> Spectacular, spikey plumes gave way to rounded, more familiar and farm-like fare. Fish from cultivated fresh-water sources was more popular than the fruits of the sea.<sup>863</sup> The drama of the hunt, which resulted symbolically in the devouring of spectacular animals gave way to a more "peaceful" display of food cultivated in farms, fish ponds and well-tended gardens.<sup>864</sup> These are the types of animals we find on the Gobelins table: simple fare, which has been "raised" doubly through the art of *mesnagerie* and the artistry of the hard-stone master.

### *Gathering the Royal flock*

An anonymous seating plan for a banquet at the menagerie in 1680 further highlights the ways in which the iconography, or conceptual program, of the civilizing process, the menagerie, and the Gobelins table made themselves manifest during table-events on site. (Fig. 72) In the plan, one finds the octagonal architecture of the observatory room echoed in the form of the banqueting table which snakes around the space's perimeter (the table is open to the vestibule in order to facilitate the delivery of food and drink). In the vestibule, the King's buffet and another buffet have been installed (at left), marking a transfer point at the threshold to the banqueting space. The seating arrangement places the King and Queen at the table's center, flanked by the King's brother and his wife at left, and his son and his wife at right. Their spaces at the table are the largest, just as the royal ciphers occupy the largest spaces on the Gobelins *pietra dura*: each couple gets one entire expanse of the octagon, whereas the other guests are seated in groups of six on each of the table's arms. All of these diners gaze into the center of the menagerie/observatory, a space marked "empty" on the diagram (*Espace vuide au milieu de la*

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<sup>861</sup> On Versailles and no forks at the King's table, Béatrix Saule, "Tables Royales à Versailles 1682-1789" in *Versailles et les Tables Royales en Europe : XVIIème-XIXème siècles*, Jean-Pierre Babelon, ed. (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1993), 52. In general, see Robert Muchembled, *L'invention de l'homme moderne: sensibilités, mœurs et comportements collectifs sous l'Ancien Régime* (Fayard: Paris, 1988), 230-258.

<sup>862</sup> Marie-France Noël-Waldteuffel, "Manger à la Cour: Alimentation et Gastronomie aux XVIIe et XVIIIe Siècles", in *Ibid*, 69-83. On the development of French cuisine under Louis XIV and his love of peas and other foods, see also DeJean (2005), 105-132 and Thomas Parker, *Tasting French Terrior: the History of an Idea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

<sup>863</sup> Noël-Waldteuffel, 69-70; Sahlins, 85.

<sup>864</sup> On the King's vegetable garden (the *Potager du Roi*) see Mukerji (1997), 167-171 and José Délias, *La Quintinie, jardinier du roi Louis XIV (1626-1688)* (Tours: Transmettre, 2015).



*Table*). (Fig.73 detail) This empty space is the zone in which their gazes intersect. The entire set-up inverts the observatory's architecture inward, so that all of the diners (except for four clearly non-privileged guests whose backs face the emptiness). (Fig.74) Behind each arm of the table were the windows overlooking these seven courtyards, and the animal paintings by Bernaerts which frame those views. Because the diners have their backs turned to these views of the zoo, they become analogous to those views and to the animals outside: they are placed on display themselves *to themselves* and come into an enclosed space in which differences and similarities can be easily discerned.

A print by Gérard Scottin (an engraver who worked at the Gobelins) based on animal paintings made through observation at the menagerie by the Fleming Pieter Boel highlights the parallels between social world of court and zoo. In this view of the *Quartier des Demoiselles* (ca. 1668), we see the panoptic octagon of the menagerie in the image's middle. In the foreground, a diverse group of birds have gathered. The regal crown-crested crane takes center stage. He stands calmly on one leg to the left of the round basin in the image's center. He is the tallest bird in the image, his plumage rising above all the others. (Figs.75-76) A pendant crown-crested crane stands behind the basin directly in the image's center, underneath the panopticon's window. This crowned bird occupies the same spot as the King in the banquet seating chart. To the left we see three demoiselles cranes, widely considered the most elegant and admirable birds in the menagerie. According to Claude Perrault, who dissected several Numidian cranes from the park at the *Académie des Sciences*, "all those who have seen the birds in the Park of Versailles have much commented on how their gait, their gestures, and their leaps have much in common with those of Gypsy women whose dance they seem to imitate...when they see that they are watched, they begin to dance and sing."<sup>865</sup> These demoiselles are thus, as Sahlins suggests, like female courtiers who surround the King, just as at the table the Dauphine, the Reine, and his sister-in-law the Princess Palatine serve as female pendants to the male royal line. Two broad-breasted bustards occupy the corner at lower right, like male courtiers in conversation; they are of intermediary height between the King and the helmeted Guinea fowl in the image's center and the Muscovy ducks and Canadian geese at lower left. These animals are simultaneously somewhat exotic and somewhat common: originally from the new world, by the seventeenth century, they were already being domesticated in Europe. These birds are not like the grand, flying cranes or bustards that represent the grand courtiers. Their bodies are close to the ground, like chickens or roosters, the emblems of the common French people.<sup>866</sup> Fig.77 The Canadian goose is feeding, as if in submission and thanks to the bounteous creatures that tower above it.

### *Seating Charts*

The print thus presents a social tableau of France as a peaceful gathering of beings of varying classes and types, each of which has their own role to play.<sup>867</sup> They inhabit one space, but are clearly differentiated. These differences are put on display, but are not presented as causing problems. On the contrary, they represent a harmonic type of sociability. It is the same image as that presented in the banquet seating chart, except that at the banquet, the *poules* in Scottin's print probably were only visible on the diners' plates. In that guise, they offered the

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<sup>865</sup> Cited in Sahlins, 105.

<sup>866</sup> Ibid.

<sup>867</sup> See Matthew Senior, "Seeing the Versailles Ménagerie" in *Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature* XXX 59 (2003), 351-363.

courtiers (or as birds, *volailles* and not *poules*) sustenance and the pleasure of enjoying the well-cultivated bounty of the farm. The King has tamed them all and brought out the best in them by clipping their wings, fattening them up, and ordering them through their appearances while also putting them into an aesthetic geometry that underlies Scottin's print in the form of the golden ratio.<sup>868</sup> They are displayed and geometrically embedded in a harmonic set of proportions, like the birds in the Gobelins table. Both the banqueting table and the hard stone table thus serve as accessories to an ornate and decorative type of social mapping that was carefully choreographed at court and mirrored at the menagerie. At the banquet there, we find this choreography isolating the diners in seven "*cours*" just as in the menagerie itself. These compartments (or "courts") find an echo in the compartments on the Gobelins table at the Louvre, which in turn resonate with the spread of carefully, symmetrically, and highly differentiated arranged sets of specialized plates on the menagerie dining table: everything has its own isolated compartment which has been inlaid into a larger picture, an *étalement dans un table/au*.<sup>869</sup>

These displays of compartmentalized plates, compartmentalized courtiers, and compartmentalized animals are like words, or signifiers, which are laid out in order to be put together in a sentence. Each element is particular, but its meaning only becomes clear in context, just as Cucci's gilding only made complete sense when paired with the Megliorini's and Branchi's hard stonework. These elements are like the signifiers described by the Port-Royal logic, which we have already visited. They limit complexity by distancing themselves from a world of embedded meanings, then transfer that meaning to the abstract realm of the table – whether the dining table or the table of signs – where an ensemble is built whose purpose is to simplify and map relationships through an embrace of the process of *representation*.

According to the Littré dictionary, the word "representation" in fact entered the French language in a new way, more analogous to our current definition, in the seventeenth century. In a letter of Mme de Sévigné, she writes of representation as "Way of life appropriate for a person distinguished by his rank..., his fortune, and also way of life when one behaves [as if] in a theatrical performance."<sup>870</sup> Representation here means conforming visibly to one's social position and making that position visible in relation to others. For Sévigné, this is associated with the creation of aristocratic façades and the culture of paranoia at court, since courtiers had effectively lost their political clout through the civilizing process rooted at Versailles and were

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<sup>868</sup> Sahlins

<sup>869</sup> With reference to Foucault and the Port-Royale logic's "table of signs", Senior writes, "As a political, scientific, and esthetic space, the menagerie bears witness to the new emphasis to the "exclusive privilege" of the visual during the Classical Age. The systematic display and naming of animals at Versailles, the "*étalement des choses en tableau*," makes visible many distinctions and inequalities in nature: distinctions between species and distinctions between humans and animals, suggested by the difference between the elevated gaze of the humans in the raised tower and the horizontal confined gaze of the animals in their pens." Senior, 352. I would suggest, however, that the table and the tableau combine in the Gobelins menagerie objects (and in the *ménagerie* as a banqueting site); they conflate the vertical and the horizontal into one space, in which the courtiers and visitors to the dinner and to the menagerie are not, in fact, above the animals, but rather analogous to them, although they are able to appreciate what is special about them. The King, on the other hand, is the one animal who is both raised above, but also among the flock, as witnessed in the king crane print by Scottin, in which the tower of the menagerie, it's panopticon, and the king of the birds become visually analogous to one another. The very definition of *étalement* is one that prioritizes the same kind of spread one sees of the birds represented both in the zoo and on the table, but also at court: nothing is hidden, nothing is lost: "*étalement: c'est-à-dire de disposer à plat en éparpillant; exemple: Un étalement clair de test produits aurait eu le mérite de les mettre en évidence. Là, c'est le fouillis et c'est pour ça que tu n'as rien vendu. Les object doivent s'imposer au regard, non le perdre.*" <https://www.linternaute.fr/dictionnaire/fr/definition/etalement/>

<sup>870</sup> Cited in Joan DeJean, "No Man's Land: The Novel's First Geography" in *Yale French Studies*, Everyday Life (1987), 178.

left with only rank as a potentially visible representational sign, immobilized like the birds in the menagerie with their clipped wings.<sup>871</sup> The table, like the menagerie, or the Gobelins' designs, are all instances in which this assembly of diverse signs cohered into a larger, interlocking, social map of signifiers, or, one might say, into a social grammar of ornament that composed a text intended to read as the *state* of France, legible thanks to the unification of differences under the umbrella of one single authority that defined and bracketed the parameters of signification.

This type of social mapping was the prerogative of all dining tables at Versailles, it was their *raison d'être*. This is most obvious when one considers the palace feeding situation, to stay with the menagerie metaphor. Eating at Versailles was a big event. Like each action of the King, much pomp and circumstance was devoted to staging his meals, twice a day, for a large audience. This grand staging meant that everyone else's eating habits rotated around the King's. His table was the sun around which the other tables orbited. After taking a modest breakfast around 8:30 in the morning, going to work with his close advisors like Louvois in his *cabinet du conseil* (or *cabinet du Roi*) at an alabaster table bounded by gold produced by Cucci, the King generally made a point of publicly eating both his *dîner* (lunch) and his evening *souper* in front of the court.<sup>872</sup> Already in the 1660s, Louis XIV had insisted on the importance of dining publicly, also stipulating that the grand Nef be placed at his table on each eating occasion in order to more heavily mark his authority and that of his objects (courtiers bowed to the Nef, as well as the King, when the golden boat was on display). There were various types of meals for various occasions, e.g. the *festin* royal, or coronation meal, and beginning in the 1690s the so-called *petit couvert*, which the King took in relative privacy. But by far the most common type was known as the *grand couvert*, which was repeated on a daily basis.<sup>873</sup>

The entirety of this meal event spanned two rooms and several staircases, although the actual amount of people eating was small: no more than ten of the King's closest blood relations. They sat at an intimate trestle table (2,05 x 1,30 m), which set up for the occasion and then dismantled every time the *grand couvert* took place.<sup>874</sup> Unlike the Gobelins tables, the dining table was not a permanent object: it was a "table performance" replete with staging and props. The King sat at this table in the *antichambre du grand couvert chez le roi* with his back to the marble fireplace at the "high end" (*haut bout*), facing the room.<sup>875</sup> Only the King sat on a chair, the rest of his relatives sat on folding stools (*pliants*). Only the King had dishes made of gold, and only the King had the special vessel known as the *cadenas*, which was placed to the right of his golden *couvert*. The *cadenas* contained the King's utensils (including toothpicks), protecting them from seditious tampering. (Fig.78) The princes of the blood and some dukes also had a *cadenas* at their private tables, but none were allowed to have one at the King's table, just as nobody else but Louis could have a Nef, except the queen if she were to join the meal (in which case every part of the service was doubled). This small group of royal diners was surrounded in the *antichambre* by a large crowd that had been gathering via the *escalier de la reine* for over an

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<sup>871</sup> Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 146-267.

<sup>872</sup> On the daily schedule of life at Versailles, see e.g. Pierre Verlet, *Le Château de Versailles* (Paris: Fayard, 1985), 253-289. On seating specifically, see Saule (1993), 47-55.

<sup>873</sup> The *grand couvert* only became known as such after the establishment of the *petit couvert* as a possibility. The latter was taken in his chamber alone at a *table caree* of 1,19 x 0,758 cm without much of the spectacle, but it only established itself quite late in the King's reign. See Saule, 52-54.

<sup>874</sup> *Ibid*, 49.

<sup>875</sup> He could feel the warmth, and the audience could see the flames erupting in an *éclat* in the marble *chiminée* behind him, in a quotidian, but powerful, instance of the way in which materiality and symbolism converged in marble at the palace.

hour prior to the meal.<sup>876</sup> In order to gain access to the meal, one needed to be properly attired (for women this meant the uncomfortable *grand habit*) and either be part of the court, or know someone who could make an introduction.<sup>877</sup> The courtiers encircled the table, with duchesses and princesses in the first row, some of whom were allowed to use a tabouret. Women hoping to gain an invitation to the King's pleasure house at Marly would present themselves and, if finding favor, the King would invite them to sit on a stool ("*Madame, asseyez-vous*"). Behind them were the standing women, and behind them were the men. The King himself was flanked at the table by the *Premier gentilhomme de la Chambre*, the *Capitaine des Gardes*, the *Premier maître d'hôtel*, the *maître d'hôtel du quartier* (who directed the meal ceremony), the *Premier médecin*, the *Premier chirurgien*, and the *Premier aumônier* (chaplain), who stood behind him.<sup>878</sup>

Prior to the event of the meal in the antechamber, a great deal of performative action took place in an adjoining guard room and staircase, which lead upward from the "*Bouche du roi*", as the insanely large and complex organization in charge of the King's food was known. It included ca. 500 officers, assisted by ca. 160 boys, and was divided into eight sections: one in charge of the *Bouche du Roi*, another in charge of the officers, and another in charge of the "*petit commun*". All of these workers toiled under the purview of the *Grand Maître de France*, who ruled via an administration that included the *Premier maître d'hôtel*, a controller general, and under them further *maîtres d'hôtels*, and gentlemen servants and still more controllers.<sup>879</sup> It was a vast operation, in charge of baking, cooking, drinks, and providing meals for much of the court – including the five hundred engaged by the *Bouche*. These serving jobs were highly coveted because of the proximity between the *Bouche* and the King's body.<sup>880</sup>

The ceremony of the table unfolded approximately as follows: When dinner was to be served, one of the *huissiers* in the antechamber called out, "*Messieurs, au couvert du Roi*" and then knocked his staff on the door of guard room where he nabbed one of the King's *gardes du corps* to go downstairs with him in order to alert the office of the *Gobelet* (the office of the *Bouche* in charge of drinks and bread). These two were followed by a train of officers. They all then paraded back up the stairs, with the *hussier* leading the phalanx brandishing his staff and a torch. They carried with them supplies for the laying of three tables: the dining table in the antechamber and two smaller tables in the guard room. The first *cortège* of officers carried fresh linens to dress these tables. A second group of officers then whisked in important accoutrements like the *Nef*, which was carried by a bodyguard and the head of the *Paneterie-Bouche* (responsible for baking). The *huissier* who led the first procession removed his hat, of course, as the *Nef* passed by him. The *Nef* contained moist, scented napkins for the King's use only, and it was placed on the so-called *table des prêtres*, one of the two tables installed in the guard room. This table was manned by a gentleman servant, who cut the bits of bread that the *Gobelet* had sent up with the *cortège*, obliging those who had carried the bread upstairs to taste it, before it was served to the King. The *Nef* marked the King's presence for this cutting and tasting ritual, although the monarch was seated in the next room. The second table in the guardroom was known as the "*buffet du goblet pain et vin*". It was laid with a ewer and basin, which the serving gentlemen used to wash their hands. On this table were also the King's wine and water, as well

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<sup>876</sup> Refer to Saule's complete description in Saule (1993), 47-52.

<sup>877</sup> Ibid.

<sup>878</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>879</sup> Ibid, 41-46.

<sup>880</sup> Georges Benoist – who St Simon jealously disparaged as an old monkey due to his close relationship to the king's *bouche*. Ibid, 42.

as plates, glasses, and utensils for each course of the meal. These were perhaps the two tables we saw in the vestibule of the menagerie on the dining plan discussed above. When all of this was set up, the *huissier* returned to the guard room and cried out, “*Messieurs, à la viande du Roi!*”. Accompanied by three more guards, he went down the stairs again to the *Office-bouche*, where he found the day’s *maître d’hotel*, a gentleman servant, and the office controller, who washed their hands and then tasted the food for poison. A *cortège* of twenty or so officers then took the plates upstairs, led by the torch-bearing soldier and the baton-wielding *maître d’hotel*. This ceremony repeated itself for each course of the meal.<sup>881</sup>

Before eating, a chaplain blessed the meal and the King cleaned his hands with the moist towels brought to him in the *Nef*, dry on one side, damp on the other.<sup>882</sup> During the meal itself, a similar protocol was followed as in the setting up. When the King wanted to drink, for instance, the gentleman-servant would cry, “*À boire pour le Roi!*”, at which point he would bow to the King, go to the buffet in the guard room where the *Chef d’Echansonerie-bouche* handed him a covered vessel on a golden saucer and two *caraffes* of wine and water which he brought back to the King’s table. Then, the gentleman-servant would pour a bit of wine and water into a small gilded cup called the *essai* (“try”), held by the *Chef du Gobelet*. The drink was tried by an attendant and the *essai* handed back to the *Chef du Gobelet*. The gentleman-servant then bowed before the King, took the top off of the cup brought in from the guardroom on the golden saucer, and presented it to his royal highness together with the crystal *caraffes* of wine and water. The King then served himself, before placing the objects back on the saucer, which the gentleman-servant brought back to the *Chef d’Echansonnerie* in the guardroom who, in turn, put it on the buffet.<sup>883</sup> There was no conversation during the meal, except for the few words uttered by the King to select, distinguished people.<sup>884</sup> When the meal ended the chaplain said grace and then the King, followed by the court ladies, retired to other rooms to converse.

Though it sounds like the performance would have taken ages, it actually was over in an hour. Somehow, during that time the King, who was a hearty eater, would have consumed something like four soups, one *perdrix*, an entire pheasant, a large plate of vegetables (salads), two large pieces of ham, mutton in its own juice with garlic, a plate of pastries and then fruits and boiled eggs.<sup>885</sup> The entire court would have observed the “grammar of social ornament” in action, and indeed they would have formed an integral part of this grammar. The ritual was meaningless if they were not present. Upon the meal’s completion, they would have also gazed at all of the food that awaited their consumption, since they would eat the King’s leftovers.

Royal meals were, thus, not jolly affairs. They were solemn and by many accounts excruciatingly dull.<sup>886</sup> The point of the meal was to demonstrate the King’s wealth and the

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<sup>881</sup> Ibid, 47-52.

<sup>882</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>883</sup> Saule, 51-52.

<sup>884</sup> Under Louis XIV, the dinner was not a site of conversation. “*Le Roi, d’ordinaire, parloit peu à son diner, quoique par-ci par-là quelques mots, à moins qu’il n’y eût de ces seigneurs familiers avec qui il causoit un peu plus*”, wrote Saint-Simon. Cited in Ibid, 52.

<sup>885</sup> “*J’ai vu souvent le roi manger quatre pleine assiettes de soups diverses, un faisan entire, une perdrix, une grande assiette de salads, deux grandes tranches de jambon, du mouton au just et à l’ail, une assiette de patisserie et puis encore du fruit et des eufs durs*,” reported the Princess Palatine on 5 December, 1718. <http://www.ecrivaines17et18.com/pages/17e-siecle/intellectuelles/palatine/la-palatine-a-table.html> last accessed 16.11.2020.

<sup>886</sup> The Princess Palatine wrote in a letter on 3 February, 1707, “[...] *Toute l’année je dîne seule, aussi me hâté-je autant que possible ; il n’y a rien de plus ennuyeux que de manger seule en ayant autour de soi vingt gaillards qui vous regardent mâcher et comptent les bouchées ; c’est pourquoi mon dîner, je l’expédie en moins d’une demi-*

realm's bounty, obviously (gold plate, many courses), but also to institute a kind of ritual syntax. Christological references abounded: the washing of the hands, the breaking of bread and the drinking of wine. The King, like Christ, is unique but can be imitated; showing himself to the subjects at his table, he shows his divinity.<sup>887</sup> The table, thus, becomes a sacred space, a space-within-a-space, demarcated by all of the transitional rituals taking place between the *Bouche*, the staircases, the guard room, the two smaller tables in the guardroom, the door-knocking, and movement back and forth in the antechamber. Precisely because the table is not permanent, ritual multiplies itself around the act of eating. Things must be brought in and built, which affords a means of putting social structure on display. Like the birds in the menagerie, the rituals enabled the court to observe itself and to differentiate between the exotic flying *volailles* and the more lowly practical, and totally necessary, *poules* on the ground. These gentlemen-servants performed tasks akin to the gilded legs of Cucci's tables and cabinets, supporting the architecture of the table event, while the cooks prepared a mosaic of delicacies to be enjoyed with civility (i.e. on a plate with a knife and spoon, though no fork) on the table's top. Again, the poultry and barnyard fare we find on the Gobelins table for the menagerie arrived in the shape of variously cooked meats, as in 1751 when Louis XV was served a "Rost" course including *pigeons badés de Choisy*, *Poulets à la Reine*, a *Marcassin de Dindons*, among other standard barnyard birds.<sup>888</sup> (Fig. 79)

After the meal everything had to be dismantled and brought back to the Office-bouche. At that point, the whole staff present at the meal could eat themselves, as could the courtiers who had been assembled at the King's meal, had they not eaten before. These "lower" tables were highly coveted spots, since the food was paid for by the King. Royal bounty trickled down the scale (and the stairs): food uneaten at the King's table was divided up by the gentleman and officers, the important ones of whom had their own "tables". This trickle flowed all the way down the social ladder, with everyone at the palace hoping to get invited to *somebody's* table since there were few kitchens and otherwise one would have to "order in" from town and foot the bill oneself.

I have gone into so much detail about the royal table ritual in order to make several related points. First of all, as an object, the table was a prominent focus at Court, one which reiterated its importance at multiple points throughout the day. It was important because it

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*heure. Le soir, je soupe avec le Roi ; nous sommes cinq ou six à table, chacun avale son affaire sans dire une parole comme dans un couvent ; tout au plus dit-on tout bas quelques mots à son voisin [...].*" Elisabeth Charlotte Duchesse d'Orléans, Princesse Palatine, *Lettres (1672-1722)* (Paris, Mercure de France, 1989), 254-255. Her daughter, the Duchesse de Berry, died of indigestion. The Princess Palatine her falling ill after devouring "all sorts of horrors" at the theater on 14 December, 1710: "*La Duchesse soudain tomba en syncope; nous crûmes que c'étoit une attaque d'apoplexie, mais après que la duchesse de Bourgogne lui eut aspergé la figure de vinaigre, elle revint à elle, et d'affreux vomissements la prirent. Il n'y a rien d'étonnant à cela: pendant deux heures, à la comédie, elle n'a fait que manger toute sorte d'Horreurs, des pêches au caramel, des marrons, de la pâte de groseilles vertes et autres, des cerises sèches avec beaucoup de limon dessus, puis à table elle a mangé du poisson et du entretemps.*" *Correspondance de Madame duchesse d'Orléans; extraite des lettres publiées par M. de Ranke et M. Holland; traduction et notes par Ernest Jaeglé.*

<https://archive.org/stream/bubgbP9kaAAAAMAAJ/bubgbP9kaAAAAMAAJdjuv.txt>, last accessed 16.11.2020. She apparently led a rather extravagant lifestyle, in all regards.

<sup>887</sup> Zeev Gourarier, "Modèles de Cour et Usages de Tables: Les Origines" in Babelon ed. (1993), 15-17; Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, "Ordnungsleistung und Konfliktträchtigkeit der höfischen Tafel" in *Zeichen und Raum. Ausgestaltung und höfisches Zeremoniell in den deutschen Schlössern der Frühen Neuzeit*, Peter-Michael Hahn and Ulrich Schütte, eds. (Munich: deutscher Kunstverlag, 2006), 103-122 and Michaela Völkel, "Der Tisch des Herrn: Das gemeinsame Zeichensystem von Liturgie und Tafelzeremoniell in der Frühen Neuzeit" in *ibid.*, 83-102

<sup>888</sup> Printed in Noel-Waldteuffel, 77.

offered one, among many other, opportunities for the entirety of Court to make itself present and to decline its order in a highly visible fashion. It was like a magnet, drawing the palace together. Like the birds aligned in Scottin and Boel's image of the demoiselles crane section of the menagerie, each meal enabled the denizens of Versailles to gaze at one another and observe how they all fit as structural elements into a larger conceptual *chassis*. By being present in all of their finery and variety, they made the state visible in its diversity, just as the King's master artisans rendered the state visible in the furniture manufactured at the Gobelins.

Of course, not *everyone* was present. There was a dress code and cultivated civility within an intimate social network was the prerequisite for entry. The only way for the denizens of the barnyard to gain access was on a silver platter presented at the table, which lay at the center of the eating event, uniting the fruits of French ground. This bounty was increasingly enhanced not by the addition of innumerable spices, as in the sixteenth century, but instead by a style of cooking today strongly associated with France: buttery sauces (instead of acidic juices) and animals cooked in their own *jus*.<sup>889</sup> Like the fowl on the Gobelins table, these "simple" dishes depended on an "*art de bien traiter*" in order to become delectable and enjoyable for what they truly *were*. An eponymous cookbook of 1674 (*L'art de bien traiter*) addressed to aristocrats defined the principles of new French cuisine, thus, as follows, "*Ce n'est point aujourd'huy ce prodigieux regorgement de mets, l'abondance des ragoûts et des galimafrées, ce n'est pas cet entassement confus de diverses espèces, ces montagnes de rosts, ces entremets bizarrement servis (...) c'est le choix exquis des viands, la finesse de leur assaisonnement, la politesse et la propreté de leur service, leur quantité proportionnelle au nombre de gens.*"<sup>890</sup> Just as the *pietra dura* master had to see the potential of stones to bring out the inherent, but hidden, value of a barnyard bird and a simple landscape, so too does the good French cook draw out the inherent qualities of ingredients.

This is perhaps why the animals in the *pietra dura* table designs stand isolated in the landscape. Alone in their boxes, they are linked to the ground (from which the stones that form them also spring) and they can also easily be scrutinized. One can well imagine how their juices might best be tapped to serve them with taste (*goût*) much as one can imagine how the stone was inspected and selected in order to best correspond to the essence of the various birds, so that they would be rendered recognizable and characteristic. They are lowly, earthly, terrestrial, but through the attention lavished on them by the hardstone worker (or chef), they are no longer pedestrian. They are rendered delicious, special, and valuable. The ornamental patterns of French *pietra dura* tables, thus, like contemporary cuisine, tended to diminish exuberance in the form of an overwhelming plenty (like the "debauchery" of Italian marble table decoration) and isolate elements in compartments to form a grid, or table, that hovered somewhere between visibility and legibility: part of a larger socio-cultural recipe. There are thus parallel forms of "mapping" taking place at and around these tables. On one hand, they make a process of resource extraction visible, and on the other, they provide a social map in which the state of France becomes visible through the display of social hierarchy.

In Félibien's report on the *fête* celebrated at Versailles of 18 July, 1668, the first episode he describes is a collation in the gardens in which the mapping of social difference and the transformation of resources at table play a key role. After wandering through the gardens, the courtiers enter a "cabinet" (a clearing surrounded by hedges) in which they find five tables laden with the most magnificent treats. The tables themselves are described as an astounding

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<sup>889</sup> Ibid, 74.

<sup>890</sup> Cited in *ibid*, 74.

manipulation of nature, an extraction of its bounty. One is shaped like a mountain, others like caves in which one finds “various types of cold meats.”<sup>891</sup> Another is like the façade of a palace made of marzipan and sweet dough.<sup>892</sup> All of these tables, which were “ingeniously made” in “*divers compartiments*” were covered with delicacies displayed in a novel manner: they seemed to grow from the earth, as if to conflate the processes of growth and civility. The transformation of nature’s riches into something delectable and wonderful is conveyed by the form of the tables themselves, whose feet are “surrounded by leaves with festoons of flowers” interspersed with figures of “*bacchantes*” that hold their tops aloft and offer a surface for the display of a ‘second nature’ above the ground.<sup>893</sup> Once the court had soaked up these sensual wonders and the *demoiselle* crane-like “*dames*” had refreshed themselves, the King and Queen abandoned the tables to the crowd of common people who followed the procession.<sup>894</sup> These, in turn, destroyed the “*arrangement si beau*”, as they pressed in to see it more closely and, in the ensuing *confusion*, “demolished these marzipan *châteaux* and mountains of *confitures*.” The crowd’s base nature – unorganized and “confusing” - literally returned the elements of nature that civility and art had transformed to the ground, breaking it up into the natural bits and pieces of resources from which the spectacle had been made. The court witnessed this destruction, which ensured that the entire scenario would have to be rebuilt so that the social dynamics the tables rehearsed could be replayed.

### *The Ubiquity of Decorous Order*

This incessant construction process was a key point undergirding the constant performance of the King’s table. For unlike the Gobelins marble tables, the King’s dining table was not immobile. In fact, it was a void. It did not exist as a permanent fixture. Unlike the King’s throne, or his bed, the dining table had to be *built* multiple times a day, and this act of building was put on display. When the King assumed his place at this table, specially built for him, he became one with the table and the table became one with him in a ritual act of transformation, or to use the deliberately cultivated metaphor: transubstantiation. One table then became many, as the King’s food trickled down the stairs of the palace to the tables of his subjects, those who supported his table each and every day- literally holding it aloft as they brought the trestles, boards, linens, and utensils into the dining chamber. In the process, the food became more and more dismembered too, recalling the chaotic dismantling of the collation in the Versailles gardens described by Félibien. This was a further iteration of transforming social ritual and objects into a kind of legible grammar, a grammar that articulated the state as a set of ordered differences as ornament. When the King was not there and his dining table was dismantled, tables like those made at the Gobelins stood in for him as markers of this ordering process. They were not simply decorations. They were embodiments of the larger social grammar, a grammar which both their decoration and their materiality put on display when the King was absent.

This ornamental and grammatical signification spread all over the palace. It was inlaid, for instance, into all of the marble *lambris* (wainscoting) and marble floors. Like the Gobelins table, these were dominated by compartment motifs, which transferred the notion of ordered harmony into the realm of total abstraction. (Fig.80-81) Compartment designs allowed for a

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<sup>891</sup> André Felibien, *Les Fêtes de Versailles* (Paris: Gallimard, 2012), 34-40.

<sup>892</sup> “*Pâtes sucrés*”, *ibid.*

<sup>893</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>894</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.



multiplicity of transformations and lively visual play between different types of marble. Repeating geometrical forms, like a circular or ovoid medallion set into a rectangle, could be varied through the alternating use of differently colored and patterned marbles. It was a concise and adaptable mode of decoration, which depended on a structure that remained varied but entirely coherent; a *chassis* for various chromatic relationships that never threatened to disrupt the overall pattern. Félibien, again, praised the *salon octagone*, for example, in the following manner, “*L’or, le métal doré, le marbre & la peinture brillent de toutes parts, & leur riche façon au magnifique, au grand et au bon gout répond.*”<sup>895</sup> Taste, here, serves as a byword for authority and order, which derives its strength from the social cachet of *politesse*, or the *poli* and the civilized, as well as from Louis’ taste for grandeur and magnificence. Describing his design for the marble-clad chapel at Versailles, Hardouin-Mansart wrote, “*les yeux avides et incertains de leur choix courent de chef d’oeuvre en chef d’oeuvre et n’ont pas la liberté de s’arrêter.*”<sup>896</sup> *Gout* directed by design becomes a mandate, which embeds the viewer or visitor to the court in a decorative scheme, as if they had been wrapped up by the green meander on the Gobelins table for the menagerie: the human is interwoven into the pattern of compartments that surrounds him/her, like the ducks and birds in the courtyards outside of the observatory. In the words of French furniture historian Robert de Félice, ornament under Louis XIV was never “flabby”.<sup>897</sup> Instead, its grammar was a taut *fillet*, or net which caught everything that entered its purview into a visual logic that ensured that any step *out* of place would be immediately recognizable.<sup>898</sup> Each element, each line, each shape, each color *had* to cohere with a larger whole to which it “responded”, to use Félibien’s phrase (“*au bon gout répond*”).

Within this constellation, I have suggested that tables served as ordering poles. They oriented the restless eyes that Hardouin-Mansart sought to control; they became a site of intense visibility, not only because they were flat and thus offered unimpeded visual access, but also because they functioned like the menagerie’s observatory: an *espace vide* that was filled only by the gazes of those gathered around it. In the case of the dining table, this occurred through the performance of its ritual construction and deconstruction. For autonomous marble console tables, this occurred because they occupied pride of place in the center of a room, where they drew visitors into their orbit like stand-ins for the King, who they resembled in their splendid singularity. The same was also true when these tables were attached as wall consoles on the side of a chamber. (Fig. 82) There, their expansive surface was flanked on either side by a set of *guéridons*, or circular tables that held torches, or lights, aloft like the gentleman-servant who led the phalanx of waiters from the *Bouche* upstairs to the King’s dining table. Furniture historians like Geneviève Souchal have claimed that the name of the light-bearing *guéridon* derived from the figure of a Moorish slave in the comedy theater.<sup>899</sup> The slave’s objectification would in this case have been completed, as he was transformed into a literal object that bore light for his owners. Under Louis, *guéridons* grew to great heights (up to six feet tall, “*grandissimes*

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<sup>895</sup> Cited in Mouquin (2018), 283.

<sup>896</sup> Cited in Julien (2013), 228.

<sup>897</sup> Robert de Félice, *French Furniture under Louis XIV*, trans. F. M. Atkinson (London: William Heinemann, 1922), 47.

<sup>898</sup> Again, in Félice’s words, “Panels are edged definitely with mouldings that serve to define their shape. Louis XIV moulding is emphatic, strongly expressed, in high relief; It produces strong effects of shadow, throwing into vivid contrast the blackness of its hollows and the lights of its projections.” *Ibid.* The resemblance to courtly dress is striking. See note 7. Note as well how Félice highlights the ways in which ornament is supposed to generate effects of division and contrast.

<sup>899</sup> Geneviève Souchal, *Le mobilier français au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1962), 76.

*guéridons*”) and were placed on either side of a larger table or a mirror, creating an ensemble in which the expanse of ornamented, manufactured, and gilded surfaces multiplied the King’s *éclat*. In this manner, the auxiliary side table, like a servant bearing a torch, became an integral agent in orchestrating both how the court saw *and* arranged itself: hierarchically. In the center, one found a console table with a large, unique, heavy expanse of marble, topped usually by a glass window or a shiny mirror that reflected the world of social ornament back upon itself.<sup>900</sup> At the tables’ sides stood the central table’s servants, the *guéridons*. Each position was determined by a corresponding relationship of “tasteful” *status*, one element “answering” to the next. Any breach, or reversal, of this order would have been immediately apparent since the relational balance of the ensemble would be visibly overturned.

And that, after all, was what a state *was* in early modern France: a relational, interlaced, and *ordered* body. Historian William Sewell has observed that, in fact, the word *État* itself was understood as consisting of three specific interlocking sets of differentiated bodies.<sup>901</sup> Some of these bodies were termed *corps*. But these, in turn, were sub-divided into *ordres*, though the orders could also be defined as *états* (estates) like the bourgeoisie, the clergy, and the nobility. The arrangement of these orders “signified not only the regular disposition or arrangement of things, but also the laws or regulations which described and enjoined this disposition and arrangement. It also meant the command of a superior. *Ordres* of a superior are made in accord with *ordre* in the sense of laws or regulations, and their faithful execution maintained *ordre* in the sense of regular disposition or arrangement.”<sup>902</sup> Since a single body can, theoretically, only have one will – as we have seen – the office of the King was charged to use law as a means of bringing all of the *états*, *corps*, and *ordres* that comprised the entire political body into order.

I have been suggesting that what was true for society was also true for the disposition of furniture and the visual logic of ornament. In terms of tables, this meant that one large console stood in the center of an ensemble of furnishings, showing off the expanse of its marble top, which was lit from each side by a torch-bearer. (Fig. 83) Each order and each body had its place in a hierarchy and this hierarchy constantly reiterated itself. The marble top was the largest and most expensive element; it took up the most space. It was in the middle, the largest, most brilliantly lit star. But in order for its position to be recognized, it depended on the collaborating presence of the *guéridons* to its sides, and its top depended on the strength of its “lower” supports. Together, these elements comprised a state whose foundation lay upon the harmonic and obedient coordination of each body and each orders’ will, under the leadership of one will that could not be divided, i.e. the King.<sup>903</sup> He was the only figure in the ensemble that could lay claim to all *corps*, *ordres*, and *états*, which together comprised the unique and grand *État* of France.

Stately furniture did not only reflect this *état*, it built it and made it manifest in an embodied sense. It was not only a product of the social order, but *ordered* the social body in

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<sup>900</sup> Reading the inventory of furniture at Versailles, one discovers that tables are generally paired with matching *guéridons*. Pattern prints by late 17<sup>th</sup>-century decorative artists further emphasized the combination of matching objects, providing blueprints for other craftsmen to follow in order to create ensembles that were simultaneously matching and varied.

<sup>901</sup> William H. Sewell draws on Charles Loyseau’s *Traité sur les Ordres et Simples Dignitez* (first published in 1610 and reissued in 1666) in his analysis of the terms and construction of ancient regime social vocabulary. See Sewell, “Etat, Corps and Ordre: Some Notes on the Social Vocabulary of the French Old Regime,” in H. U. Wehler, ed., *Sozialgeschichte Heute: Festschrift für Hans Rosenberg zum 70 Geburtstag* (Göttingen, 1974), 49-68.

<sup>902</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>903</sup> Sewell, 60.

multiple ways. As we have seen, the production of “stately” furniture necessitated, for instance, the establishments of new possibilities for furniture production, which demanded new legal structures and privileges in order to adequately meet the state’s demands of self-presentation. The innovative mode of production that developed in this context, in turn, furnished the state with objects whose visual and material elements reiterated these political imperatives. They did this not simply because these object “illustrated” a political message through iconography, but because their very structure – their balance and stability, as well as their surfaces and material variety – made them manifestation of the state’s political foundations and bolstered the claims to “expertise” on the part of its rulers, whose *raffinesse* rendered itself palpable thanks to the corresponding expertise of its craftsmen.

The objects these expert artisans produced were demonstrations, further, of the power of differentiation and collaboration, operating on a scale beyond the means of a single individual and harnessed together (fruitfully) in a way that only a *state* apparatus could. Their existence was predicated upon the office of the Crown, which in turn depended on this production in order to make itself manifest. As a particular object, tables, I have argued, reenact this process of state-building in their form and ritual functions in a particularly power manner. Unlike other pieces of furniture like cabinets or beds, the table offers itself as something that potentially can be shared by many. The table gathers people to it, whether in supporting roles or as principle actors and it spread them around (*étaler en tablea/u*, to speak with Foucault) in a way that heightens their visibility. The starring role shared by the table and the King is that of the state itself, whose majesty depends on the participatory strength of each attending element, made visible in the table’s form and the rituals that accompany tables’ usage. That is why it was so vitally important for the table to be built and deconstructed at every possible opportunity at Versailles: the process made the entire apparatus of the state-as-collaboration visible. And even when the table was not being set up or dismantled, other tables could stand in for the collaborative process thanks to their physical attributes. These tables, like the Gobelins work in the *ménagerie*, or any ensemble of marble-topped console cum flanking *guéridons* – and indeed the entire decorative scheme of the palace with its “tyrannical” *compartiments* – made these political imperatives manifest constantly. They mapped them into space and into ornament, which was not superfluous to the state, but rather its very essence.

The (visual) structure of all of these elements is similar. They all rely on patterns of fragmentation that foster a sense, paradoxically, of overall control. By the same token, each element of the tables produced for Versailles built and entrenched this controlling logic, which depended on a collaborative force for its full effect. The smallest mark, the tiniest gilded acanthus leaf and the most insignificant chicken were part and parcel of a tightly knit – or in our case inlaid – pattern of stone-cold order. In order to make this pattern visible, resources must be removed from the ground, assembled, and polished in order to make them shine. The hardstone table, I have argued, is a rehearsal, a prop, and a materialization of this process of “state” building, Bourbon-style. The starring role shared by the table and the King is that of the state itself, whose majesty – it’s *état*, i.e. its *status*, i.e. its *standing* – depends on the participatory strength of each attending element.

### *Maintaining Magnificence*

Collaboration in absolutist France, as William Beik has argued, occurred along two axes: it either grew from mutual benefit, or from necessity.<sup>904</sup> In the case of Louis XIV's furniture, the King actually needed the help of furniture makers. The skills of the artisans at the Gobelins and the particular configuration of artisanal production at the manufacture were necessities if the political imperatives of his furniture were to be realized. For the artisans working there, collaboration with the regime satisfied perhaps not so much a necessity as a set of desires. It raised their socio-economic status, enabled them to make costly goods, and to unfold their skills in exceptional ways as a group. The relationship was one of mutual benefit. Of course, this benefit also extended to the king. Necessity need not exclude reciprocity. These dynamics make themselves manifest in the development of the "French" style we witnessed taking place at the Gobelins, as more wild Italian elements of *pietra dura* were tamed in favor of a style predicated upon compartmentalization and visual exposure. It was a particular and a unique style, the style of the King: "Louis XIV". It was a *state* style not only because it was sponsored by the Crown, but because its constitutive visual elements embodied a visual grammar that corresponded to the state's social ideology, as I've argued above.

Once this style developed, however, it needed to be maintained. Hardstone tables did not gleam forever; hence the repetition of table-maintenance rituals. When Louvois took over the *Bâtiments* from Colbert, he instituted a vast system of new internal checks, controls, and reports in order to ensure this constant maintenance on the production side of the palace's decoration. This system was less hierarchical (although Louvois himself obviously was at the top of the administrative pyramid), than planar like a tabletop. It depended on each inspector reporting on the other, to tighten the enterprise and guard against losses. All was, in a sense, out in the open, exposed; no one controller was more favored than another since Louvois played each one off of the other.<sup>905</sup> When something was broken, this insured that it would rapidly be repaired. In November 1684, the year that Couplet's table was made, Louvois wrote to his controller Lefevre from Fontainebleau, with the following admonishment, "do you remember the piece of marble that I showed you in the presence of the King, which is broken at the side of the Salon in his apartments – fix it."<sup>906</sup> Not one detail could be allowed to chip if the symbolic state edifice were to remain standing.

In the previous episode of this chapter we have seen how the ideology of marble entangled a broad cast of characters and locations into a web of collaboration, which resulted in the production of objects like the Couplet table. In this episode, we have seen that cast multiply to include the furniture makers and artisans of the Gobelins, the animals at the menagerie, the staff of the *Bouche*, and the inanimate but vitally expressive forms of ornament and furniture in which the social and spatial imperatives of the French court made themselves manifest. Ornament, I have suggested, and objects like tables were not simply objects of prestige because they were ostentatiously expensive. They were more than simple staging. They were generators of order that demonstrated the collaborative force and meaning of *stately* design in an exemplary fashion. This is why they needed to be consistently displayed and maintained. Rance marble, in particular, lost its luster quickly and demanded frequent re-polishing. Marble workers thus moved through the palace on a consistent schedule to maintain the ornamental order: on Monday, the *grand appartement du Roi*, on Tuesday the Galerie, the queen's apartment came on

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<sup>904</sup> William Beik, "The Absolutism of Louis XIV as Social Collaboration" in *Past & Present*, Aug., 2005, No. 188 (Aug., 2005), 195-224.

<sup>905</sup> Sarmant, 121.

<sup>906</sup> Cited in *ibid*, 121.

Wednesday, the King's staircase on Thursdays, and the baths on Friday. The courtyards and other galleries occupied the polishers on the weekend.<sup>907</sup> Furnishing the state royally demanded an expenditure of constant, skilled, and coordinated labor. In 1686, the year of the spectacular Siamese embassy, the *éclat* of Versailles' stonework and its decorative order was entrusted to the *marbrier* Pierre Lisqui to the tune of 1500 livres a year.<sup>908</sup> The Siamese embassy's visit culminated at Couplet's glittering table, in the Cabinet of Curiosities, which is the space to which we will turn now in conclusion.

#### Act 4

#### Curtains on Versailles, or the Invention of the Power Desk and the Order of History

As we saw at the outset of this episode (a veritable Versailles miniseries) of "On the Table", when the Siamese embassy visited the Gobelins hardstone workshop in 1686, where Couplet's table was most likely produced, the *Mercure Galant* remarked, "All of the stones that became part of this work are precious stones, and they cut such small ones that it is almost impossible to see them before they have been set in place."<sup>909</sup> Such was the case as well with the state; it has taken a while to bring it into view in this chapter, just as it took many years to assemble an image of it in early modern France. Yet, our journey has shown how one simple object scarcely one meter by one meter large exemplified so many of the processes that went into both visualizing and building Bourbon state in this period: from the scientists at Colbert's *académie des sciences* and their career ambitions, to Louvois and Vauban and the militarization of France and the hardening of its borders, to the rafters, carters, and marble workers in the South and the North, the *lizzatori* in Carrara, bankers like Pierre Formont, furniture makers and craftsmen at the Gobelins, courtiers and birds at the palace, toll-takers and tax-collectors, the King and his men (and their kitchens). Each had a role to play in laying out and performing "stateliness" as an ensemble of ordered, interlocking pieces, the image of which can be grasped – inadequately, of course – in the single object of a table that was located for one brief moment at the center of the palace in the cabinet of curiosities.<sup>910</sup>

This room, which no longer exists, is where this episode will end, returning to where the table first introduced itself to us, lit by the chamber's rock crystal chandeliers and gleaming in the reflected light of the hundreds of mirrors lining the walls of perhaps the most opulent room at Versailles (converted ultimately in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century into a billiards salon for Louis XVI).<sup>911</sup> The *cabinet*, also known as the *Cabinet des Médailles*, or the *Cabinet des Raretés*, is an apt place to conclude not only because Couplet's gift seems to have found its first home there, but also

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<sup>907</sup> Julien (2013), 233: footnote 138.

<sup>908</sup> Ibid.

<sup>909</sup> Translation from Knothe (2008), 50.

<sup>910</sup> That there were cracks in this state (disputes, disruptions, expulsions, etc.) goes without saying. My focus, however, has not been to debunk claims of absolutist power, but rather to see how a vision of statehood was articulated rhetorically through furniture like the hardstone tables produced at the Gobelins. Hence, I have focused on the ways in which the fictions of the table and their material production conjoined. For an analysis of the fraying of this fiction, see for instance Sarah Grandin, "'Of the greatest extent': The Matter of Size in Louis XIV's Savonnerie Carpets" in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, Volume 49 (2020), 263-281

<sup>911</sup> Verlet (1985), 230-232.

because it only briefly (a year, it seems) resided in that location.<sup>912</sup> If we began by examining the reasoning behind offering the King a gift of a map rendered as a hardstone table(au) of his realm, then we might well end by considering whether the gift failed or succeeded to achieve its goals.

This question can perhaps be definitively answered: the table did not stay for long in this special place, where the King “took pleasure in coming nearly every day after mass until dinner...and always found something to learn.”<sup>913</sup> The reason for its disappearance would appear to be part of the conflict between geography and history as leading paradigms of state ideology that we witnessed as lying in the abyss between Colbert and his mercantilist priorities vs. his successor Louvois, with his military ambitions, although both enterprises were oriented toward the eye of posterity. Today, we tend to think of states in terms of geography: a state looks like the bounded form we are familiar with on the map. The dimensions and form of a state are related closely in our imagination to its ground, to its resources, to the abstraction of its cartographic projection. But as we have seen, under Louis XIV, the geographic concept of statehood was very much *in nuce*. The demand for the state to have magnificent *status* was an equally, if not greater, priority. This meant mapping out a historical, not a primarily geographical picture. Yes, marble “mapped” the French state, as we have seen, but Bourbon statehood embodied itself equally in the historical dimension of Louis’ grand furniture, which built upon classical and Italian precedents, recast in a modern, French paradigm. Marble was only partially of geographic interest, as we have seen; it’s language was also laden with historical and religious symbolism. It was into this symbolic paradigm that Couplet had intended to insert the academicians’ desires, by presenting the King with an object that was both historically *and* geographically important in that it demonstrated visually the connection between monarchical and metric rule. Yet, as we shall see in conclusion, the King’s cabinet of curiosities was, to use Robert Wellington’s phrase, most fully a space of *historical* self-presentation and imagination; geography had little role to play in this particular display of the King’s status and/or his state.

Moreover, the design of this space was bound up in the rivalry between Colbert and Louvois: organizing the cabinet of rarities became a means for Louvois to assert political influence and control, as he had done upon taking control of the *bâtiments*. Within this constellation, one might ask, how was historical information to be presented, to be laid out? How was history to make itself visible in order to articulate claims about the King’s state? Tables played a role in that endeavor. Surprisingly, for the contemporary reader, the cabinet of curiosities at Versailles was an oddly cut-throat space; more salacious details of its story heighten not only *our* curiosity today, but also indicate the seriousness of the space as a political project. We now tend to think of Baroque *Wunderkammer* in terms of staking claims for political mastery of the world (presented in the microcosm of a delightful collection), for generating knowledge, and for building social and scientific networks.<sup>914</sup> The cabinet of curiosities often

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<sup>912</sup> After the visit of the Siamese embassy, no further visitors, like Nicodemus Tessin, to the cabinet appear to have commented on the table, which leads scholars to believe that it was no longer on display.

<sup>913</sup> Molinet, “L’histoire du Cabinet des Médailles du Roi,” *Mercure Galant* (May 1719), 50; translation from Robert Wellington, in Wellington, *Antiquarianism and the Visual Histories of Louis XIV. Artifacts for a Future Past* (London/New York: Routledge, 2015), 96.

<sup>914</sup> The literature on the early modern *Kunstkabinett* and *Wunderkammer* is vast. Several sources will be named in the specific context of this chapter, but the most important literature includes the recent survey at the Metropolitan Museum of Art entitled *Making Marvels: Science and Splendor at the Courts of Europe*, Wolfram Koeppel, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019); Samuel Quiccheberg, *The First Treatise on Museums: Samuel Quiccheberg’s Inscriptiones*, 1565, trans. and ed. Mark A. Meadow with Bruce Robertson (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2013); Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature 1150- 1750* (New

appears to us as a site of wonderful and bedazzling *copia*. (Fig. 85) The history of the King's collection in the *cabinet* at Versailles, however, encourages us to take the political stakes of wonder very seriously, and also to think through how the furnishings of this particular kind of space played a role in articulating political imperatives. It is with these thoughts in mind – political rivalries, rivalries between geography and history, the challenge of furnishing history – that we will close the curtains on our visit to Versailles.

### *History in Action*

The cabinet of curiosities was the culmination of a sequence of enfilade rooms on the *piano nobile* in the oldest part of Versailles, which had been newly remodeled to accommodate the court before it officially moved to the former hunting lodge in 1682.<sup>915</sup> Not far from the *escaliers des ambassadeurs*, the chamber was slightly off access from the longer chain of interconnected state rooms known as the *Grand Appartements*, which were the sumptuous suite of spaces accessible to the public, who assembled there for a series of parties that happened weekly on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings before the King's dinner was served at ten. In 1682 (the year these parties began), the *Mercure Galant* described these events in great detail, noting the decorations and furnishings, while highlighting the ways in which a series of tables served as channels through which the King could display his magnanimity and magnificence to the assembled crowd, as we will presently see.<sup>916</sup> At the same time, the tables afforded an opportunity for Louis to also showcase other qualities understood as desirable in a King, like prudence.<sup>917</sup> The *Mercure's* description begins in a still-unfinished room lit by twenty-six crystal *lustres* and sixteen candelabra perched atop a series of just as many finely wrought *guéridons*. The billiard table, which stood in this space, itself might be seen as a kind of metaphor that allows us to grasp the dynamics of the tables and social ordering processes that follow in the subsequent rooms: it is a frame in which a kind of highly controlled disorder can unfold.<sup>918</sup> Chance encounters of balls, reined in by the table's borders and also the skills of the

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York: Zone Books, 1998); Horst Bredekamp, *The Lure of Antiquity and the Cult of the Machine: the Kuntkammer and the Evolution of nature, art, and technology* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1995); Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Krzysztof Pomian, *Der Ursprung des Museums: von Sammeln*, trans. Gustav Rossler (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1988); Julius von Schlösser, *Die Kunst- und Wunderkammern der Spätrenaissance: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Sammelwesens* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt und Biermann, 1908).

<sup>915</sup> On the King's large and small galleries at Versailles, see e.g. Verlet (1985), 220-234; Alexandre Maral, "Grande Galerie et appartement du roi à Versailles: sens et usages sous Louis XIV" in *Versalia. Revue de la Société des Amis de Versailles*, n°12 (2009), 121-13; Stéphane Castelluccio, "L'Appartement du roi à Versailles, 1701: Le Pouvoir en Représentation" in *Versailles et l'Europe: L'appartement monarchique et princier, architecture, décor, ceremonial*, Thomas W. Gaehtgens, Markus A. Castor, Frédéric Bussmann, and Christophe Henry (Heidelberg: arthistoricum.net, 2017), <https://books.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/arthistoricum/catalog/book/234>.

<sup>916</sup> Magnificence and Magnanimity are the terms Madeleine de Scudéry uses in the first conversation of her collected *Conversations Nouvelles sur divers sujets dédiée au roy* (Paris: Barbin, 1684), 1-25.

<sup>917</sup> On the importance of prudence as a seventeenth-century kingly virtue, see Flandrois

<sup>918</sup> Billiards became increasingly popular at court during the seventeenth century and Louis XIV enjoyed the game greatly. As with all elements of the "civilizing process", billiards transposed physical conflict from the outdoors into a table situation indoors. Instead of wrestling, or playing tennis, billiards staged conflict as a contest predicated upon mastering fine-muscle control of distancing instruments (the cues, which were made of dense and slow-growing guaiacwood (*guaiacum officinale*) from the Caribbean or northern South America. The part of the cue that struck the ball was broader than it is today, more closely resembling a modern hockey stick base. These were made of wood or ivory. The green top of the table replaced the landscape outside; variations included the game of fortresses in which

players, channel passions and aggressions into a series of regulated and directed collisions. Click click. The King provides the frame, the *chassis*. (Fig. 86)

As a point of departure, the billiard table disperses the *Mercure*'s reader into a description of the most opulent court one could imagine: "choice marble", silver furniture everywhere, silver vases filled with orange trees and other fragrant plants, lit by a million crystal chandeliers whose light multiplied a thousand times in mirrors and other splendid reflective surfaces. Paintings are no more important than items of furniture; a Carracci St. Sebastian, a portrait by "Vendeik", a Virgin by Titian; none of these generate more text than objects like the tables laid out in the center of the rooms.<sup>919</sup> In the *Chambre de Mercure*, there are three gaming tables, one for the King, one for the Queen, one for the rest of the royal family. Yet though these placeholders for their royal highnesses are clearly marked as "theirs", they are generous enough ("*ils on la bonté de se mêler*") to merge with their guests in the other rooms; in the *Chambre de Mars*, for instance, there is a marquetry *trou-madame* game, as well as a square gaming table, one triangular one, and six rectangular set-ups, each draped in the same green velour lined with gold thread.<sup>920</sup> (Fig. 87) Here, while Bellona and Glory strike victorious poses on the ceiling, the French court battles it out at cards and the King mingles with them. He is grand enough not to demand that everyone rise if he sits down to join a group of players, and the most addictive games ("*la Bassette & le Hoca*") are banished, thanks to his prudence, since he knows what is "best for his subjects."<sup>921</sup> His generosity and care expels the seditious impulses that drive one to gamble: greed, vanity, desperation, moral turpitude. Everything seems to be taken care of. Some tables even see newly-invented games; the *appartements* are a site of creative (self)-invention, and a means of staging the King's bounty and his concern for the well-being of his court. Anything his people could want is already supplied because the King's magnanimous imagination is so complete.<sup>922</sup>

In the *Salle de Diane*, one finds more tables "covered in silver candelabras and filigreed baskets... Raw fruits, lemons, oranges, pastes & *confitures sèches* of all kinds, accompanied by flowers, piled into pyramids" offer themselves to the visitor; each and everyone helps him or herself according to their heart's desire.<sup>923</sup> More buffets follow, leading to a collation in the *Salon d'Abondance*, where a Caracci painting shows Aeneas carrying Anchises out of burning Troy – these, ô Roman, are your arts! In that final room, tables are laden with drinks, like coffee, chocolate, as well as liquors, sorbets, and juices; "very excellent wine" is supplied to those who want it, who only do so with much "order & propriety."<sup>924</sup> (Fig. 88)

These are key words for the whole event. Everyone attending is someone of reputation and thus everyone behaves respectably. The event, though crowded, is entirely "*sans confusion*"

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various military obstacles were set up on the table, or *trou-madame*, a variant in which a façade with numbered openings was installed on the table through which players had to shoot the balls. See Élisabeth Belmas, *Jouer Autrefois: Essai sur le Jeu dans la France Moderne (XVIe-XVIII Siècle)* (Seysse: Champ Vallon, 2006), 150-152.

<sup>919</sup> "Tout a été fait aux Gobelins, & execute sur les Desseins de M le Brun." (sic) *Mercure Galant*, 42.

<sup>920</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29.

<sup>921</sup> *Ibid.*, 30. On seventeenth-century gaming, politics, and the "scourge" of gambling, see Belmas (2006), John Dunkley, *Gambling: a Social and Moral Problem in France, 1685-1792* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1985), Thomas M. Kavanagh, *Dice, Cards, Wheels: a Different History of French Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

<sup>922</sup> "*comme on y trouve en abundance tout ce qui peut satisfaire le goust, l'imagination n'a qu'à chercher ce qui luy plait...*" *ibid.*, 56.

<sup>923</sup> *Ibid.*, 37-38.

<sup>924</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-41.



(unlike the crowds who crushed the garden collation in 1674).<sup>925</sup> The order of the state makes itself manifest in the same manner as the decorative *compartiments* that surround it. Abundance is so ubiquitous, because governance is so prudent, so skillful; everything happens without the guests even noticing just as all the rivers on Couplet's table flow with no apparent hinderance to the King: food is whisked in and out, croupiers deal and count scores, one must suffer none of the "incommodities" that normally accompany large assemblies of people.<sup>926</sup> These table displays serve as instruments that bring the King to his court, which make him available, just as all the wonders of the world flow onto the tables; the bounty is available to the courtly *ménage* (and hence to France as a *menagerie*) because the King is such a great and prudent monarch. Wealth presents itself as part of a positive moral economy, rather than part of a commodity market of economic exchange, and tables are the most immediate means of indicating how the positive moral state (*status*) of the monarch effects the state (*lo stato*) of France.<sup>927</sup> While other objects present including paintings, furniture, lamps, marble *lambris*, etc. convey the King's uniqueness and power to summon resources and produce something extraordinary, the simple buffets and gaming tables are the mechanism through which others can gather and partake actively in this staging of statehood, as a site of distribution. Each of Antoine Tournon's 1694 suite of engravings of these events features a table as the centerpiece of an *appartement*, excluding the fourth chamber reserved for dancing.<sup>928</sup>

The final room, the one filled with the hot and cold beverages, was known as the room of abundance itself (*salon de l'abondance*), and on its ceiling a painting by René-Antoine Houasse (after designs by Le Brun) depicts Magnificence flanked by Immortality and Genius, in turn surrounded by Neptune, Thetis, and Saturn, whose treasures wash up along the *trompe l'oeil* balustrade encircling the room. (Fig. 89) Vessels made of precious stones, corals, rich carpets line this perimeter, forming the edge between room and "sky".<sup>929</sup> Pride of place among those objects is given to a painted representation of the King's Nef (Fig. 90), which is perched atop the passageway from the Salon into the cabinet of rarities. The Nef reiterates the presence of the King as the sponsor of all the tables his guests have enjoyed (like the trickle-down effect that would happen once the royals had finished eating at the daily *Grand Couvert*); it also marks a site of transition. For it is the gateway between one set of representations taking place at the parties in the chambers of state, into the cabinet of curiosity which is a separate kind of representational space, at once connected to the spaces that precede it, but different from them.

The King's *cabinet* lay at the end of the enfilade of the *Grand Appartement*, as we have just described it. This meant that one had to pass through all of the other rooms in order to access the more remote inner chamber. Arriving at the enfilade's end, in the room of abundance, one would have walked a straight path. (Fig. 90) Suddenly that path ended; the end of the enfilade was reached. One then had to turn to the right and mount five marble steps in order to continue, passing under a bas-relief over-door by the sculptor Antoine Coysevox (who we encountered briefly teaching drawing at the Gobelins) portraying a bare-breasted woman in Roman dress

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<sup>925</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>926</sup> Ibid.

<sup>927</sup> On differences between this scene and other stagings of the King's relationship to the developing French commodity market, see Chloé Hogg, "The King in Trinkets: Madeleine de Scudéry's *Conversations* and the Downsizing of Absolutism" in *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 41 No. 3 (2018), 355-371.

<sup>928</sup> In dance, the floor rather than the tabletop was shared. On dance, militarism, and the French court see Van Orden (2005).

<sup>929</sup> On the *salon de l'abondance*, see Wellington, 85-87 and the essays collected in *Le Salon de L'Abondance: Antichambre des Collections Royales*, ed. Béatrice Sarrazin (Versailles: Château de Versailles, 2014).

sitting atop an urn spilling forth gems and medals; these representations, alongside the representations of objects along Houasse's fictive balustrade suddenly transformed when entering the *cabinet* into "the real thing." (Fig. 91) Everything that one had seen illustrated on the walls in the antechamber with the drink buffet became *real*: objects of great rarity, unique precious and semi-precious stones, carved and set as vases and ewers, countless medals (27,000 by the Swedish visitor Nicodemus Tessin's count)<sup>930</sup>, Emperor Charles V's jasper baptismal vase, Rudolph II's Nef, and of course Louis' own Nef, weighing in with twenty-six kilos of gold and gems, posed directly on axis to the entrance atop a fine green marble fireplace (*vert moderne*, from Genoa).<sup>931</sup> In a certain sense, this set up (with the Nef) mirrored the set-up of the King's *Grand Couvert*. At dinner, the King assumed the spot that the Nef assumed in his cabinet. At dinner, he ingested the fruits of the earth and the ocean; in the cabinet, the seas and the earth had, to use Scudéry's term, coughed up their "entrails", and here the visitor found himself in the King's most interior cavern, *inside*, as it were, as if they had been digested and polished by his majesty like the gleaming marble fire place on which his Nef rested, flames flickering inside.

Scudéry would write in relation to the King's "digestion" of these objects into his cabinet, that Charles V's vase "will be esteemed more in two thousand years for having been in the Cabinet of Louis le Grand."<sup>932</sup> What her description underscored was that the common denominator of all of the objects in the *cabinet* was their priceless. They were at the end of a chain of object biography: they were so valuable that they were invaluable, priceless, "swallowed", if you will. These were objects that, like the Gobelins furniture, could not be purchased by anyone but the King because they were so exquisitely unique; this meant that they were outside of the larger commodity market, which they surpassed.<sup>933</sup> They were the culmination of the symbolic *enfilade*. It could go no further, just as the architectural suite could go no further. And this had a very specific sense when it came to presenting the image of the state which the cabinet was intended to make manifest: it aimed very specifically to show that Bourbon France (and Louis XIV) was the *end* of history (it was, after all, even raised five steps above the rest of the *piano nobile*). I mean this in the sense that as a site of historical representation, the room was filled with objects that, like the King, were entirely unique and outside of any shared commercial economy (unlike the game tables and buffets in the *appartements*); they were the *ne plus ultra*, yet they also showed that contemporary France had taken up the gauntlet of Antiquity and become greater than anything that had ever been in the entire history of the world.<sup>934</sup> This is what made the objects curious: their luxurious rarity, as Mersenne wrote, "a king in his kingdom, who, having been raised more splendidly and nourished more delicately, needs more things that his subjects and the rest of the people can do without; he has a number of officers, valets, and purveyors; thus the mind of man uses all the senses, and dispatches them to forage among all that nature has established here below, in order to serve not

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<sup>930</sup> Stéphane Castelluccio, *Les Collections Royales d'Objets d'Art de François Ier à la Révolution*, CRHAM Quarto 68 (Paris: Éditions de l'Amateur, 2002), 114.

<sup>931</sup> Castelluccio (2002), 117 and on *vert moderne* also known as *vert d'Égypte* see Mouquin (2018), 39-40.

<sup>932</sup> Scudéry (1686), translated in Wellington, 90.

<sup>933</sup> Jean-Marie Apostolides makes this point as well in Jean-Marie Apostolides, *Le roi-machine, Spectacle et politique au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Minuit, 1981), 105-7.

<sup>934</sup> Charles Perrault, in his tale *Peu d'Âne* writes, "Il était une fois un roi si grand, si aimé de ses peuples, si respecté de tous ses voisins et de ses alliés, qu'on pouvait dire qu'il était le plus heureux de tous les monarques." <http://touslescontes.com/biblio/contes.php?iDconte=166>, last accessed 2.12.2020.

only for his necessities but also for his pleasures and diversions.”<sup>935</sup> Decontextualized and removed from the market, polished luxuries and rarities were a sign of the King’s unsurpassed – indeed remarkable and curious – power.

The room was thus designed to show that history had been leading up to one point and that that point was Louis XIV and the State of France; that was history’s aim and its culmination. The opulence of the room confirmed it. This is what, on one hand, made the room an appropriate place to put Couplet’s gift, which announced France and the King as the inheritor of Ancient Rome, replete with an infrastructure (marble quarries, waterways) that built upon ancient precedent and surpassed it.<sup>936</sup> Yet mapping was not really the point of the curiosity collection at Versailles, nor was natural science; temporality was far more important, a point that was underscored by the quite deliberate architectural *parcours* through the palace that visitors traversed to arrive at the King’s cabinet as well as by the unique objects placed in the room. For the precious stone vases, statuettes, *joyaux*, engraved gems, and other antiquities located there were in a way merely embellishments for the cabinet’s centerpiece: the vast Kingly collection of antique and modern medals. These were the real core of the *cabinet*. They were what made the desired historical narrative clearly legible.<sup>937</sup>

Legibility and visibility (the characteristics we’ve determined as key aspects of table-ness) were *not* qualities generally associated with early modern curiosity cabinets and *Wunderkammer*. As we know them from inventories as well as images, early modern collections tended to be complex spaces filled to the brim with a multitude of a great variety of objects. Images tend to show them overflowing; shelves piled high, boxes stuffed, cabinets containing piles of objects; even the ceilings of the early modern cabinet were hung with specimens. Although sometimes outfitted with labels, the sense one gains today from inventories of these types of spaces is one of copiousness bursting forth; that is what made them both exciting and replete with information and potentially rich sets of epistemological connections. In this context, tables could serve as a means of making sense of these vast and “curiously” arranged collections, since one could select objects from the multitude and put them out in the open on the table’s plane in order to render objects (and their connections to other objects laid on the table) visible. A 1668 watercolor of the Dimpel family collection in Regensburg exemplifies how tables could perform this sort of ordering task; here, tables line the walls and one long table also stretches clear across the room’s center. These furnishings render the objects placed upon them more easily graspable than those placed next to or on the tables in shelves and cabinets. Likewise, the

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<sup>935</sup> Mersenne cited in Lorraine Daston, “Curiosity in Early Modern Science” in *Word and Image* Volume 11 (1995), 396. Hence, curiosity was not divorced from acquisitiveness, but rather made itself manifest in acquiring that which seemed unattainable. On the interweaving of consumer appetite, luxury, and curiosity in the seventeenth century, see *Ibid.*, 391- 404.

<sup>936</sup> Comments on the table like that of Reverend James Hume who came to visit Versailles in 1714 echo the sense that this particular object was appropriately placed in a cabinet of curiosities since, as Hume wrote, it presented a “curious map of France in chamfer’d or inlaid work of divers coloured Marble.” Cited in *Visitors to Versailles: From Louis XIV to the French Revolution*, Daniëlle O. Kisluk-Grosheide and Bertrand Rondo eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), ca. 137, 263. The curious nature of the table, as Hume describes it, referred to the old Latin sense of curious *cura*, or care/ful in the sense of artistry and workmanship. See Daston (1995), 398.

<sup>937</sup> Hobbes, one of the *grand siècle*’s most vocal proponents of curiosity as a virtue, claimed that curiosity itself led to language, to “theorems, or Aphorisms”, reducing chaos to *legibility* and “generell Rules”. Here, rule and ruler appear to make happy bedfellows since the most curious man in the land is the ruler, following Mersenne cited above. For only the king is best able to make use of both his senses (since he’s not forced to work and can cultivate them fully) and only he has the resources to be truly “curious” in the sense of bringing forth all that is curious on the earth thanks to his unrivaled command of resources. Hobbes’ *Leviathan*, cited in Daston (1995), 394.

table on a frontispiece of the *Museum Wormianum* (describing the collection of Danish polymath Ole Worm in 1655) from offers an easily legible inscription in the center of an otherwise intricate and hence not-easily-surveyed landscape of *stuff*.<sup>938</sup> (Figs. 92-93) This was not only true for bourgeois, humanist collections but also for royal collections. When The French royal counselor Balthasar Monconys visited the *Wunderkammer* of August of Saxony in 1663, as Lorraine Daston has pointed out, he began by trying to describe the contents, but quickly “lapsed” into summarizing; it was impossible to see all of the contents, let alone to list them. In Daston’s words, “the sheer quantity and variety of the objects, as well as the custom of arranging them cheek-and-jowl by one another, reduced the curious to a state of blurry-eyed exhaustion. Vision was first stimulated, and then overwhelmed.”<sup>939</sup>

Louis’ collection display at Versailles contrasted greatly with these other contemporary collections of rarities and curiosities in that everything about it bespoke regimented order. Even though it was insanely opulent, it was not in the least chaotic, just as the soirées in the adjoining rooms were not “confusing.” It was rich and curious, but more monogamous in its focus than other contemporary wildly promiscuous princely cabinets of wonder. The room was somewhat longer than it was wide, and it was lined with symmetrically disposed niches, shelves, paintings (by Leonardo, Raphael, and other famous artists, selected mainly for their format rather than their subject<sup>940</sup>), and twelve specially designed medal cabinets (*médailleurs*) designed by the naturalized Dutchman Jean-Alexandre Oppenordt who worked out of the *ateliers* at the Louvre. Mirrors multiplied all of the objects a thousand times over, enhancing their sparkle and the sense of plenitude, but this did not disrupt the imperative to order: if anything, the mirrors made each object easier to inspect, since one could see it from the back as well as the front.<sup>941</sup> The furniture in the *cabinet* included two large arm chairs, covered in brocade of gold woven with the ciphers of the King, “*la chaise du Roy*” covered with thick gold cloth and embroidered with small landscapes “*si gay*”, as well as (starting in 1684) a day bed emblazoned with the King’s *chiffres*, six richly worked folding stools, and a *chaise d’affaires* covered in red velour and white taffeta; Louis would not need to leave the room in order to relieve himself – continuing the digestion theme – enabling him to spend many uninterrupted hours in his happy place, where as we have noted, the King spent many hours, daily between mass and lunch, as well as after dinner, “and always found something to learn”.<sup>942</sup>

The largest piece of furniture by far, however, was a table (now vanished) designed by Jean Berain I and executed by Oppenordt that anchored the room. It was massive, with eight legs, marquetry of tortoise shell and brass, outfitted with six drawers that locked. It had a type of armoire with more drawers below on its supports and was topped with silver-lined green velour, like the game tables in the *appartements*. It was ca. 2.08 x 1.3 meters long and wide, almost twice as long as Couplet’s “rival” table and about the same size as a modern billiards table.<sup>943</sup> It must have been very heavy and cumbersome to carry up the stairs at Versailles, but with

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<sup>938</sup> Ole Worm, *Museum Wormianum* (Leiden, Netherlands: Jean Elzevir, 1655), <https://digital.sciencehistory.org/works/rv042t91s>.

<sup>939</sup> Lorraine Daston, “Visions: The Disorder of Things and the Unity of Art and Nature” in *Visions*, Daston, Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, Jürgen Renn (Berlin: Max-Planck Institute, pre-print), 18. <https://www.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/sites/default/files/Preprints/P100.pdf>

<sup>940</sup> Castelluccio (2002), 115.

<sup>941</sup> See Castelluccio (2002), 112 – 117 and Wellington 88- 94 on the outfitting of the cabinet.

<sup>942</sup> This was noted by Claude de Molinet, a servant who worked on the cabinet’s inventory. Cited in Wellington, 96. See also Castelluccio (2002), 114.

<sup>943</sup> *Ibid.*

5,600,00 livres flowing into building projects at the palace in 1684-85 and 22,000 men plus 6,000 horses working on site, it was surely not difficult to find the necessary manpower.<sup>944</sup>

It is likely that the ornamentation of this table matched the ornamentation on the *médailleurs*, which contained the vast, but thoroughly systematized filed trove of medals, which were arranged by size, material, period, and origin.<sup>945</sup> (Fig. 94) The King's ornamental ciphers wound these historical objects together, like the meander on the menagerie table, ensuring that the monarch's decorative signature declared itself as the unifying factor both on the trays, and the table itself where one could place the medals to inspect them with specially commissioned golden magnifying glasses and batons (somewhat analogous to billiard cues) that he could use to move the medals around.<sup>946</sup> (Fig. 95) In the medal trays, one found a series of punctual representations of historical events, stretching back to antiquity and culminating in modern France, the period that supplied the bulk of the medals (representations of Louis' own reign greatly outnumbered those of any other modern ruler).<sup>947</sup> The King's present thus merged seamlessly with – and overshadowed – a lineage of rulers who came before him; taking them out of the trays, he could bridge gaps in space and time between their reigns and his, connecting his biography to a long pedigree of glory and fame on the surface of his massive table.<sup>948</sup>

The green of the billiard table and the roundness of the balls clinking against one another with relative contingency in the *salle de billard*, the King's usual haunt during the *appartements* parties, gave way in this contemplative space to a personalized field of play in which the King could stage his reign in context by taking medals out and assembling them into a historical pattern undisturbed by clutter on Oppenordt's tabletop. Illustrative sheets featuring both sides of each medal and explanations were fashioned by André Morell (the drawings), Marc-Antoine Oudinet and Pierre Rainssant (the explanations). Each sheet matched the drawers from the cabinets where the trays of medals were stored.<sup>949</sup> (Fig. 96) They provided not only explanations of the contents, but a visual summary in tabular form that preceded but framed the examination of the medals when taken out and placed on the table. These “tables” of knowledge thus both paralleled and framed the ways in which history was enacted in miniature on the green velour of Oppenordt's power top. All of these elements ensured that there was little room for deviation when interpreting the historical significance of both the collection and the room. There were no potential slippages, just as the medals could not budge within their custom-made trays; everything was very precisely laid out so that the specific narrative was rendered resoundingly clear. The King could take them out and play with them, but they would always be arranged back in the order dictated by their containers.

This begs two questions, since we have already determined (easily, thanks to the clarity of the set-up) what the narrative was. One question is how and why this narrative built itself in a quite literal sense. The cabinet was not the first location in which the collection was stored; it needed to be constructed. The second question touches more directly on the issue of representing

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<sup>944</sup> Sarmant (2003), 179.

<sup>945</sup> Wellington, 92; Antoine Schnapper, The King of France as Collector in the Seventeenth Century, in *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* Vol. 17, No. 1, The Evidence of Art: Images and Meaning in History (Summer, 1986), 196.

<sup>946</sup> Wellington, 95.

<sup>947</sup> Ibid, 101.

<sup>948</sup> Ibid, 88.

<sup>949</sup> Again I am extending the point made by Wellington about the King assembling history in his cabinet, with an eye to how the table and the storage units allowed him to order the objects in a manner that corresponded with his official role as a giver of orders and with the social function of tables, both furnishings and scientific, or historical “tables” of information as analyzed in part one of this chapter.

the state not as a geographic image, but as a historical narrative. Like the cabinet, this narrative also needed to be built. The two were, thus, intertwined, but I suggest we begin with the second and then think about how a particular pedagogy of history can be linked to the *arrangement* of history in the King's *cabinet des médailles*.

History was arguably the most important subject when it came to educating a seventeenth-century monarch. They needed to learn where they stood in relation to the past, but also was supposed to glean practical lessons from the past about how to make decisions in the present. Learning about historical precedent was considered not only an expedient, but a necessary means of prudently making up one's mind.<sup>950</sup> It was problem solving. History, however, also posed specific difficulties. First of all, history was chock-full of information, and some of this information was deemed to be harmful. One would not want to expose a future monarch to potentially subversive material: what if one were, for example, to give a balanced account of the French Wars of Religion? Or account for the miserable condition of the Third Estate? These were issues best avoided.<sup>951</sup> Second of all, history was *thick* with information and monarchs were not supposed to be pedants. The Ruler must learn that which is necessary to make good decisions and understand his or her place in history (in relation to previous rulers), but he or she was certainly not called upon to become a historian or an intellectual. They were not supposed to be buried in books like a scholar. They were supposed to *act*. Geography was deemed to be less important than history when it came to building the sort of education that a Prince needed to become an actor on the political stage in part because it did not provide blueprints for action. Moreover, it was deemed to be easy. The Père Lamy noted that it was easy to learn geography, "*il ne faut que des yeux et un peu de mémoire.*"<sup>952</sup> Geography was thus assigned a supporting role until the end of the seventeenth century when it came to educating the Dauphin. It provided a stage upon which history unfolded, but not much more. In the French case, the Bourbon ascent to the throne necessitated a reconstruction of historical narrative. As we noted at the outset of this chapter, the accession of Henri IV witnessed a shift away from the notion of the state as a *république* (with an emphasis on the *bien publique*) and the start of an ideology of the state as an *état* (and the concomitant *bien de l'état*) This shift undergirded the reform in the type of historical education the French monarch received.

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<sup>950</sup> On the education of French princes in this period, see Flandrois op. cit. and on the education of Louis XIII specifically, see Jean Héroard, *Journal de Jean Héroard*, ed. Madeleine Foisil, (Paris: Fayard, 1989). For a slightly earlier period the function of exemplarity in connection with constructions of history, see also Timothy Hampton, *Writing from History: the Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

<sup>951</sup> On historian's resistance to Louis XIV, see Phyllis K. Leffler, French Historians and the Challenge to Louis XIV's Absolutism in *French Historical Studies* Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring, 1985), 1-22, Orest Ranum, *Artisans of Glory: Writers and Historical Thought in Seventeenth-Century France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), and Erica Harth, *Ideology and Culture in Seventeenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983). Harth recounts an episode in which Mazarin forbids the young Louis XIV from reading Mézeray's *Histoire de France depuis Faramond jusqu'au règne de Louis le juste* (three volumes, 1643-1651). Harth claims the problem lay in Mézeray's assessment of politics, but Pascale Mormiche has argued that the real problem was that the valet de chambre La Porte, and not Louis' précepteur Hardouin Beaumont de Péréfixe, was reading to the Dauphin before bed (i.e. not at the allotted time slot for lessons). History, she argues, was precisely not a subject for the King to read up on in a learned fashion. It should be useful, not an intellectual pursuit. See Pascale Mormiche, *Devenir Prince: l'École du Pouvoir en France* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2009), 299. Jean Rou, whose tables appear below, was reproached for including both protestants and the Port-Royale in his universal history. La Reynie, chief of police, noted that since Rou was responsible for the Dauphin's education, he should have taken better precautions in preparing his chronological tables. Mormiche, 237.

<sup>952</sup> Lamy cited in Mormiche, 417.

Louis XIII had learned a great deal about juridical history early on in his life with his *précepteur* Nicolas Lefevre; by the time he was ten, he had begun instruction on Byzantine law, boning up on everyone from Agapetus to Justinian. This was, in part, a typical humanist educational move: Louis was to make connections between the Byzantine Empire and France.<sup>953</sup> The emphasis on the legal dimension, however, was somewhat new and it had a specific purpose and this part of his education began the year his father was assassinated. Louis XIII's *précepteurs* and *gouverneurs* were eager that the Dauphin learn a particular type of history, one grounded in juridical and political tenets. These, they believed, would tether future political decisions to an understanding of the state, and make use of reason as a means of making decisions that would bolster the good of the state. His loyalty should be to the Bourbon state and not be skewed to particular individuals. Hence, legends and myths ought to play less of a role in princely education than they had previously in the sixteenth century, since good decisions were decisions made not on the basis of legend but through reasoned thought. Louis XIII therefore was fed texts like Du Haillon's 1577 *Histoire de France*, which proposed a new conceptualization of France devoid of fables and miracles.<sup>954</sup> He also read histories like Claude Fauchet's 1579 *Recueil des antiquitez gauloises et françoises*, which was reedited in 1611 and which was oriented expressly toward legal history. Moreover, Fauchet's work marked the triumph of a specifically *state* history and genealogy, that began with Pharamond and led to the present. France, in this *récit*, appears as an autonomous Gallican state independent of actors from elsewhere.<sup>955</sup>

The histories that Louis XIV's father was learning, therefore, inculcated the Dauphin with a specific view of the French *état*; it was a unified and independent history, associated with Christianity but no longer oriented around Greece and Rome, although the classical past still served as an essential reference point and aspects of traditional humanist education remained important in princely education. But Greek and Roman authors no longer were the focus of the Dauphin's training. Louis XIII's brother Gaston d'Orleans, as historian Pascal Mormiche observes, was the last French prince to read Homer and other classical authors like Polybius and Plutarch extensively.<sup>956</sup> The goal of princely pedagogy had become much more concrete, goal-oriented, and immediate; history was to be put to pressing political use (hence also an emphasis on current and recent events, alongside older history). This process of establishing a useful history dovetailed nicely with the establishment of state ideology in France. New figures became important points of reference. Specifically, Henry IV and, farther back, Louis XI (Saint Louis), who increasingly became an exemplum of French kingliness. In 1618, Claude Ménard wrote and edited the first adaptation of the history of Saint Louis by Joinville (a long chronical written in 1305-1308), for example, and a growing number of other publications came out in this period that were explicitly aimed at princely education and which featured the medieval Louis XI. These eagerly drew connections between the present state and the fact that Saint Louis famously conquered the challenges of both the Burgundians and an unruly nobility to secure France's stability. Positioning Bourbon leadership in this continuum shored up the young dynasty's legitimacy and tenacity, while also staking claims for both cultural autonomy and longevity. These texts simultaneously placed an emphasis in princely pedagogy on the *state* of France, both as a diagnostic barometer (the condition of its *status*) and a political entity (*lo stato*).

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<sup>953</sup> Ibid, 292.

<sup>954</sup> Ibid.

<sup>955</sup> Ibid, 294.

<sup>956</sup> Ibid.

Louis XIV's education was guided by these developments. Mazarin expressly insisted that the Dauphin's memory not be "*surcharger*" by extraneous information.<sup>957</sup> Unlike his subjects, the King needed to be educated in a way that laid out the desired history in abridged soundbites, so that it sprang readily to mind without any unnecessary complications. Images were a key tool in making this happen. Stefano della Bella and Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin produced a series of playing cards in the vein of the *institution du prince* genre (as the mirror of princes was known in this period in France) but as very short texts with images. (Figs. 97-99) These instruments of learning through imagery were rather like a simplified version of the prints made for the medals cabinet years later. They included small depictions of a single king (queens followed later, as did geography in the form of allegorical figures), and a brief note about his successes and failures.<sup>958</sup> They drew on contemporary pedagogical trends embodied by celebrated figures like Jan Amos Comenius, who promoted the notion that games could be educational (*dulce et utile*) and whose pictorial textbook the *Orbis Pictus* would be published in 1657.<sup>959</sup> They also built on Jesuit pedagogical ideas, summed up by Père Richome in 1597 who declared that images provides a "*facile et preignante instruction*" and added that "thanks to their colors and contour lines, they throw us into the spirit of knowledge of a thousand things in the blink of an eye, that otherwise would pass through the ear over a long period of time."<sup>960</sup> Playing cards, like medals, allowed one to grasp historical information in an abbreviated form so that one could recall it quickly and make use of it promptly. Moreover, they could be mobilized, unlike knowledge stuck in books. Small, mobile objects with soundbites and images conveyed history to the young Dauphin in a way that prioritized seeing the construction of his own *gloire* in tandem with the strengthening of the French state, so that they two *états* established themselves in the monarch's mind as intrinsically linked.

Geography took a back seat in this training; the active deployment of history made a much better pairing with military training, which required thinking about terrain and strategy, but not necessarily geography.<sup>961</sup> The child Louis XIV could play, for instance, in a playground-fortress set up for him in the courtyard of the Palais Royale.<sup>962</sup> His father had used a map of

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<sup>957</sup> Mormiche, 299. Mazarin also gave the young King an early immersion in affairs of state by inviting him into the council chamber with his ministers. In his memoirs, Brienne writes, "*Ce prince ne manquait jamais de venir tous les matins tenir le Conseil dans la chamber de Son Éminence... il ne manquait jamais de venir prenfre une longue lecon de politique après le conseil. Le cardinal, dit-on, ne lui a rien caché...*" Brienne, cited in Georges Lacour-Gayet, "Rapports de Louis XIV et Mazarin" in *Revue Historique* T. 68, Fasc. 2 (1898), 235. These lessons, while long, were not pedantic in the sense that they aimed to promote practical knowledge, tethered to present political circumstances and not to accumulate knowledge of history for the sake of learning.

<sup>958</sup> Some card lumped the kings who provided poor examples and who suffered from the same faults together on one image, like the "cruel" kings, including Childéric, Clotaire, and Childébert or lazy ones like Clotaire III and Thierry I. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8408335s/f10.item>

<sup>959</sup> On images and education in early modern France see Jean Adhémar, "L'Enseignement par image" in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (January/February, 1988), 64-70, Orest Ranum, "Jeux de Cartes pédagogique et enfance de Louis XIV" in Philippe Aries and Jean-Claude Margoin eds., *Les Jeux à la Renaissance* (Paris: 1982), 553-562. Hugh Gaston Hall, *Richelieu's Desmarets and the Century of Louis XIV* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 212- 236. Paris Amanda Spies-Gans, "A Princely Education through Print: Stefano della Bella's 1644 Jeux de Cartes Etched for Louis XIV," in *Getty Research Journal* Volume 9 (2017), 1-22, and Naomi Lebens, *Prints in Play: Printed Games and the Fashioning of Social Roles in Early Modern Europe* (PhD diss. The Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 2016).

<sup>960</sup> Cited in Adhémar, 53. Translation mine.

<sup>961</sup> On young prince's military education, see Mormiche, 375-398. Desmarets and della Bella's *Jeu de la Géographie* was illustrated not with maps, but with allegorical figures.

<sup>962</sup> *Ibid*, 387.



Ostend in 1604 to learn about what was going on during the siege of that city during the struggles between the Spanish and the Flemish. As a four year old child, Louis XIII's doctor Hérouard recorded the Dauphin declaring to his governess "*cè moi qui bat les Espagnols*".<sup>963</sup> That was the same year he became a small soldier, receiving a pair of boots, a harness, *cuirasse*, an *hausse col*, *jambières*, a helmet, and even a sword from the English ambassador.<sup>964</sup> But although he was totally cloistered in the palace and had little access to the world beyond, the map of Ostend proved to be an exception when it came to learning about geography and cartography. The Sun King's father's primary lessons about his own realm took place when visiting representatives of certain provinces came to pay tribute to the toddler prince at Saint-Germain and brought him gifts from their regions: pears, lemons, oranges, flowers, and the accents of the provincial envoys were what most vividly conveyed to the Dauphin the smells, sights, and sounds of his future Kingdom.<sup>965</sup> Otherwise, he had a smattering of maps and geography texts that were quite outmoded: Thevet's *carte gallicane* from the previous century, as well as *La Géographie* by Paule Mérule that did not include all the French provinces, and a map by Jolivet who had been working for François 1 back in the 1560s. This isn't to say that maps totally were neglected. His brother Gaston went on to assemble a collection of no less than 2000 maps, which later passed to Louis XIV. But they played a decidedly minor role in building the French Dauphin's world view until Nicolas de Fer was officially named *Géographe du Dauphin* (and then *des enfants royaux*) in 1689.<sup>966</sup> Geography thus became integrated into French princely education well after Louis XIV had grown up. It was then, for instance, that the geographer had the Dauphin engrave an image of the Franche-Comté which his father had conquered, an exercise that could be paired with the histories the Dauphin had learned to compose in order to summarize and internalize his father conquests during the War of Devolution.<sup>967</sup> (Fig. 100)

Louis XIV did not have this type of cartographic education, although he appears to have had maps made by Nicolas Sanson, the man whose map adorned Couplet's table (more on him shortly). What the young Sun King possessed instead were history books about the French state combined with tables, designed to reinforce the lessons of the books visually, in the same vein as the playing cards Desmaret made for him as a toddler. In a 1663 *mémoire* on the utility of history written by the *lectuer du chamber* Perigny, it was noted that for his son, Louis XIV wanted "*trois cabinets composés de tables chronologiques, géographiques et généalogiques...propres à chacune de ces histoires, avec un indice général pour chaque cabinet...Il vouloit accompagner ces tables de portraits et représentations, tant des grands princes et autres hommes les plus illustres.*"<sup>968</sup> Clearly, he had internalized his lessons and wanted to pass them on to his heir – geography in this set-up would offer a stage for the lessons of the two other cabinets.

Perhaps it is, therefore, not surprising that medals and history were what most interested Louis XIV when it came to collecting. As Antoine Schnapper has shown, Louis' early tastes

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<sup>963</sup> Sic. Hérouard, 187.

<sup>964</sup> Ibid, 111.

<sup>965</sup> Hérouard, 186. On the experience of space and Louis XIII's childhood at Saint-Germain, see Marie-Christine Cécillon, *L'Expérience du Corps Au Domaine Royal de Saint-Germai-en-Laye au Debut du XVIIe Siècle d'Après le Journal de Jean Heroard* (Mémoire de Maîtrise, Université de Paris-IV, 1986), who very generously scanned her thesis and shared it with me.

<sup>966</sup> Mormiche, 419.

<sup>967</sup> Ibid. The Dauphin wrote 68 pages on that war, in chronological order using a shortened form, like an *abrégé* (an outlined, or abridged form) akin – if somewhat more developed – to the bullet points of information that a table, or game could offer.

<sup>968</sup> Ibid, 207.

developed under the influence of his mother and Mazarin, and were skewed toward the types of object that one could later find in the *cabinet des raretés* at Versailles: precious stone vases and gold filigree. The other taste, developed, I have suggested, through his historical education: an appetite for medals that would allow him to visualize himself as the continuation (indeed apogee) of a historical line of great men in a manner that was quite literally easy to grasp and provided no room for ambiguity. He had never really developed an interest in collecting art— although he did have a clear passion for building.<sup>969</sup> So it is notable that when the time came for him to remodel Versailles in a way that showed off the collections he had not really attended to previously, the emphasis was clearly placed on building a cabinet that made historical legibility its obvious (wildly sumptuous) goal. The *cabinet des médailles* was also the only room that Louis *never* remodeled when it came to the presentation of his personal collection. Once it was built, cabinet’s structure remained in place and Oppenordt’s table, with its abstract field of green upon which history could unfold as a series of incredibly bounded, round, metallic units, also remained in place for the rest of the Sun King’s long reign.<sup>970</sup> The trays of medals could be added to, but the design and the order into which they were placed were built to last: they were the end of history.

The eight-legged surface of Oppenordt’s fashioning was the support upon which visiting dignitaries, expert numismatists and antiquarians, but most of all the Sun King himself could watch history unfold with no friction, like a firmly-struck billiard ball in the *Salon de Diane* where the only limit was the frame that the King himself supplied.<sup>971</sup> Oppenordt’s *grand bureau* marked the triumph of the “power desk” as a specific kind of table that announced, and operationalized, the King’s role as orchestrator of *grand actions*. One is reminded of how in the center of each of the King’s fortresses, lay a locked coffer, (“*Un coffre bien fermé, dans le cabinet du commandant, don't il aura une clef et l'intendant l'autre*”). This coffer marked the power of the high commander’s will to determine the future: it contained the name of replacement authorities should the fortress commander perish; the safe was the means by which he kept a grasp on the future. Oppenordt’s insertion of lockable drawers and storage units into the King’s *cabinet’s* table appropriately designated the King as the *superanus* with access to the grand historical determination of the future thanks to his command of the past. The table plane upon which he reenacted the past simultaneously served as a rhetorical springboard for the future determined by none other than himself (although it is difficult to imagine how that future could surpass the historical pinnacle that the Sun King already represented, at least in the heart of his palace inside the mirrored cabinet, where he only was able to see mirrored reflections of his own “making”).<sup>972</sup>

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<sup>969</sup> On the Louis XIV as collector, see Schnapper (1986), Schnapper, “Trésors sans toit: sur les débuts de Louis XIV collectionneur” in *Revue de l'Art*, n. 99 (1993), 53-59, and the essays collected on the King’s taste in *Louis XIV: L'Homme & Le Roi*, Alexandre Maral and Nicolas Milavonovic, eds. (Paris: ESPF, 2009).

<sup>970</sup> Certain objects were changed out, but the cabinet does not appear to have been consistently rebuilt, as were neighboring rooms in both the *grands* and the *petits appartements*. See Castelluccio (2002), 112-117 on changed made in the collection display.

<sup>971</sup> Interestingly, it seems as though the first mention of a billiards table is in an inventory of Louis XI made in the fifteenth century; the game thus appears to have linked Louis XIV to the namesake whose example was cultivated in the Sun King’s education. See David Levinson and Karen Christensen, *Encyclopedia of World Sport: From Ancient Times to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 46.

<sup>972</sup> I put “making” in scare quotes because, as we have seen, each item fabricated for the palace relied on a vast, interconnected chain of labor and resource management. On desks vs. tables in today’s political arena, see the ridicule heaped on Donald Trump after holding a post-defeat speech in the 2020 American election at a diminutive table instead of the customary oval office Resolute Desk.

Oppenordt's production and the transformation of this space at Versailles in fact marked the emergence of the desk as a type of furniture, one linked to authority, but not yet named a "bureau". In the parlance of the era, it was still a "table".<sup>973</sup> Mazarin and Richelieu had also had tables in their cabinets of state, but they did not have built-in drawers. The new power desk, on the other hand, needed eight legs not only because it was as large as a billiard table in its expanse, but also because the eight legs (four clustered on each side and bound together by curved wooden *enlacements*), supported sets of drawers on each of the table's sides. (Fig. 101) These gave the object added weight, as well as the authority of secrecy noted above. Like a fortress, it stood its ground firmly. The front of the desk was indented, or "brisé" in French to accommodate the legs of the user like one later listed in the Versailles inventory defined as "*une table de bois de noyer de Grenoble...au dessus de laquelle sont six portres fermant à clef; le devant est fait en gorge pour mettre les genoux du Roy*".<sup>974</sup> These objects were custom fitted to the Sovereign's famous legs, its surface a substitute for his march on the battlefield.

It was only after 1700 that one set of legs disappeared from this type of furniture (in innovative works by Boulle, with only six legs), eventually spawning a variety of offspring, like four-legged desks, roll-tops, *tables à gradin* (tilted tops), and commodes. In the seventeenth century, however, the Princess Palatine would still describe a desk given as a present to her daughter as a table with drawers (*table munie de tiroirs*). When it was placed in the *cabinet de curiosité*, therefore, Oppenordt's weighty desk, presumably embellished with the King's ciphers like related tables by him such as one at the Metropolitan Museum, retained more of an association with the King's table than with the sort of bureaucratic tinge we today associate with the *desk*. It is no wonder that it aligned in this space so closely with the Nef. This table announced that its authority derived from the same source as that of the other King's tables, where he set the order and the state assembled around him. Its innovative design also highlighted, though, that this particular proto-desk – something historically "new" itself – was built to carry and command the entire weight of history into the future.

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<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/nov/27/trumps-furniture-fail-desk-donald-table-tv-dinners>. Other French nobles installed collections in their private cabinets that were not filled, like the King's, with *objects non-pareils*, but instead were stuffed with images celebrating the King's historical glory. The probate inventory of Mlle de Montpensier, for instance, revealed that her cabinet at Choisy contained no less than twenty Van der Meulen works depicting the monarch's successful sieges. The vertical paintings were installed between the room's windows, while others were located opposite the windows and smaller formats above the doors. In her memoirs, Montpensier wrote, "*Le Petit Cabinet est orné de conquêtes du roi peintes par Van der Meulen...Les sieges, les combats, les occasions y sont écrites, afin que l'on sache ce que c'est. On y connaît le roi partout, il est fort bien peint, il est sur la cheminée à cheval. Il n'y a rien à dire sinon que le Cabinet est trop petit, il y aurait encore bien des actions à y ajouter; je trouverai des places ailleurs pour avoir la joie de voir les grandes actions qu'il a faites, et qu'il continuera à faire.*" Cited in Richefort, 127. What becomes evident in Montpensier's writing is the degree to which the imaginative horizon, as well as the view, offered by her cabinet was subsumed into a horizon of expectations described by Van der Meulen's highly legible paintings. It was not the King, in this installation, who was the subject, although he ostensibly was the subject of Van der Meulen's works. Instead, Montpensier was his subject in the sense that her world view was framed by the King's actions, which as in the *appartements*, defined what was thinkable and visible thanks to the incredible legibility and ubiquity of the cabinet's decorations.

<sup>973</sup> Daniel Alcouffe, "La naissance du bureau et de la commode au XVIIe siècle" (paper presented at the conference "Décoration intérieure et plaisir des sens, 1700–1850", organized by the University of Geneva/Unité d'histoire de l'art and l'Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne/Equipe de recherche HiCSA et Ecole doctorale d'histoire de l'art, December 3-4, 2020).

<sup>974</sup> *Inventaire général du mobilier de la Couronne sous Louis XIV (1663-1715) Partie 2 / publié... sous les auspices de la Société d'encouragement pour la propagation des livres d'art*, Jules Guiffrey, ed. (Paris: Au Siège de la Société, 1886), 172 (#477).

## *The Politics of Cabinets*

Like history, order and control need to be built over time. The ordering of the cabinet was a process and also a highly political project. The purging of complication from history, as we have seen in the case of the young King's education, took effort. New forms of pedagogical presentation that articulated a rhetoric of *ordre* and clarity in history were the product of a long trail of work, and also conflict, on the part of the prince's educators. The *cabinet* underwent a similar process of transformation and the conflict that manifested itself in that context crescendoed through the rivalry between Colbert and Louvois. Louis XIV was not the first French king to collect medals. Francis I had a respectable collection at Fontainebleau, which was augmented under Catherine de' Medici and served the purpose of positioning the monarch as a learned collector in the humanist tradition. As the position of the King weakened, however, and France became embroiled in increasing religious and social strife under the late Valois, the collection was dispersed.<sup>975</sup> Colbert, however, was well aware of the cachet to be obtained by reestablishing such a collection of historical medals and cameos, which would complement a grand collection of art, furniture, and spectacular buildings. He thus embraced a policy of active collection expansion, regardless of the King's own lack of passion for collecting.

Colbert was abetted in this task by happenstance: when the King's uncle Gaston died in 1660, he left an enormous bequest to the monarch including a collection of coins, medals, and engraved gems (as well as a massive library and other *Kunstkammer* specimens like shells, bronzes, maps, and illustrated volumes of flora and fauna, especially birds).<sup>976</sup> Gaston's collection manager, a man named Abbé Bégnine Bruneau (or Bruno) came along with Gaston's belongings.<sup>977</sup> The King accepted the bequest (inventoried by Bruno) a year later and had it moved to the Louvre, where it joined the remains of the Valois medals and the other objects that Henry IV had placed in the *Salles des Antiques* (although like his grandson, Henry was more interested in architecture than art).<sup>978</sup> Colbert, a great bibliophile, must have been thrilled by the inheritance of Gaston's collection and began adding to it by buying up even more people's collections. These included that of Paris' unpleasant police chief Tardieu, described in Boileau's *Satire X* as "hideous". Tardieu had been murdered along with his wife in their home on the *Quai des Orfèvres* by robbers who snapped while attempting to muffle the Tardieus' cries for help. Unbeknownst to the Tardieu's heirs, their parents – better known for their love for money than as patrons of the arts – possessed a considerable collection of medals.<sup>979</sup> Once discovered, these medals were sold to the Crown. Little by little, Colbert began to cull a more than respectable trove of items for the King's *cabinet*.

The Tardieus' hidden treasures, Gaston's legacy, and the extant royal collections found a home under Bruno in the Louvre where they resided in considerable chaos. Colbert had commissioned Pierre Gole (the right-bank *ébeniste* we've encountered previously) to build a new storage unit for the *Trésor de Childeric* and another one for shells, yet when Bernini came to visit the collection in 1665, he could not see the Greek coins since they were contained in a box

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<sup>975</sup> See Wellington, 80.

<sup>976</sup> Ibid, 80-81.

<sup>977</sup> On the history of the collection, see Thierry Sarmant, *Le Cabinet des médailles de la Bibliothèque nationale, 1661-1848* (Paris: École des Chartes, 1994).

<sup>978</sup> Schnapper (1986), 190.

<sup>979</sup> Sarmant (1994), 31.

so warped that it would not open. The lack of overview and organization was a problem. If the point of a collection was self-presentation (of the King), it had to be visible and understandable, both comprehensive *and* comprehensible. But precisely the opposite was true at the Louvre. Abbé Bruno was buried under a pile of chaos. He spent all of his time constantly sorting objects from one box to another. Since there was no underlying classificatory system, the collection could poorly absorb all of the new acquisitions. Ad hoc solutions were *de rigueur*. With each new purchase or gift, Bruno would reshuffle everything in a hodge-podge fashion into already overstuffed shelves, trays, and boxes with the result that he was the only person who knew where anything was stored.<sup>980</sup> Although an inventory was made during this time, it failed to distinguish new acquisitions from extant holdings and also failed to mark “doubles” when objects were listed in multiple categories, something that would later emerge as a problem when Louvois would accuse the Colbert clan of trying to deliberately create confusion in the medals cabinet in order to pocket medals and profits.

In 1666, however, while Bruno was still in charge, the Court was away at Saint-Germain, when the unfortunate Abbé was killed while arranging the collection in the Louvre. Again, the culprit was a thief; he entered the *galerie des médailles*, stabbed the unfortunate Abbé, leaving him in a puddle of blood and hightailing it for a nearby window. Alerted by the cries of a construction worker, a guard tackled the intruder on the building’s cornice, and he plunged to his death on the cobblestones of the courtyard below.<sup>981</sup> The very same day, the King appointed a man named Pierre Carcavi, who was the head of the Royal Library, to helm the medal and curiosity collection, which then moved to where the library was stored in the Rue Vivienne. Like Bruno, Carcavi answered directly to Colbert: they were the latter’s “creatures” or clients. When the collection moved to the *bibliothèque royale*, not much changed in terms of organization. Gole’s cabinets were moved, and the container maker Louis Daubencourt made some new trays, but all in all, no money was spent on decoration or equipment and the room assigned to house the collection rapidly proved to be too small.<sup>982</sup> As we have seen, Samuel Quiccheberg had noted the utility of storage units in collections, but containers were only useful if they were labeled and arranged under the schema of a larger, logical organizational umbrella, which is precisely what Louis’ collection lacked.

Thus, in the rue Vivienne, the collection began to seep and spread around the building. And the inventory that the King ordered upon Carcavi’s promotion to head of collections in order to “*remettre toutes choses en bon estat*” paints a rather drab picture of the state of the state’s collection. It also more closely resembles other early modern curiosity depots like the Worms museum than the future *cabinet des médailles* at Versailles. When it was still in the Royal Library, the collection included five *fauteuils* (in poorly kept green velour), a portrait of the *Roy Jehan*, five large vases, sixteen figurines in bronze, marble, and ivory of different sizes mixed up on a mantelpiece, seven large flies from the Indies (dried), a “Chinese cabinet” containing eighteen lizards and other insects (mostly broken up into bits), a sort of bottle made of a coconut, several boxes of engraved gems, some of which were in the armoire that stored the dried flies alongside Pascal’s copper mathematical machine, a concave mirror, an English microscope, a porcelain dog scratching its snout, more valuable medals and gems stashed in boxes and bowls, as well as several bags of unsorted medals weighing a total of sixty-three

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<sup>980</sup> Sarmant (1994), 28.

<sup>981</sup> *Ibid*, 33.

<sup>982</sup> *Ibid*, 42.

pounds.<sup>983</sup> That was one room. Others contained a cabinet of shells, Childéric's treasure (presumably in Gole's custom-made cabinet), more porcelain and *faiences*.<sup>984</sup> None of this was suitably presentable to show off the King's wealth, cultivation, and power nor did it conform to the standards or scope of the geographically inspired suite of rooms that Charles Perrault reported Colbert had intended for the Louvre: a sequence of chambers "representing the nations of the world through objects, furnishing, and national styles."<sup>985</sup> It was pretty much all over the place in a quite literal sense.

When the King came to visit his collection at the rue Vivienne in 1681, the *Mercure Galant* described how he was presented with his engraved stones displayed on a large oak table, which allowed him to "*qui les faisoit découvrir d'une seule veüe*".<sup>986</sup> This was because the table display was the only means of facilitating an overview of what otherwise was a jumble. It offered not only a chance to inventory the collection with the eye, but also the possibility to put it in order, as Leibniz would say, "*was zusammengehörtet, gleichsam in einem augenblick*".<sup>987</sup> This imperative to lay things out clearly on a table *or* in tabular form seems to have been what guided the interior design of the later *cabinet* at Versailles, wherein all excess objects including porcelain, insects, etc. were excised so that only the medals and most unique artifacts like the Nef and Charles V's vase remained unobstructed. On their shelves, in highly organized cabinets, or on the great big table, these "curiosities" readily offered themselves to an eye seeking order and clarity. The move to Versailles constituted, however, not only a material but also a political purge.

Immediately upon Colbert's death, Louvois was appointed to take control of the *bâtiments* and hence also of the collection, which Colbert had claimed as part of his domain as head of the King's buildings years before. Louvois quickly proceeded to use the cabinet as a means of demonstrating his superiority to his predecessor as an administrator. He fired Carcavi *tout de suite*, accusing him of mismanaging the Cabinet, an accusation also directed humiliatingly at Colbert's son Jacques-Nicolas, the *coadjuteur de Rouen*, who was nominally Carcavi's boss (though Colbert *père* clearly had always been the real man in charge). Carcavi was senile, Louvois claimed, and had been funneling valuable materials out of the collection to the benefit of the Colbert clan. Hence the odd doubles and other irregularities in the inventory. The persecution was relentless and very public. It didn't help matters when Carcavi wrote to the Marquis that he had always done everything in close concert with Colbert; or rather, this seemed to prove the point that Louvois wanted to make. On 6 December, 1683 La Reynie, the lieutenant general of the police, was charged by Louvois with conducting his own inventory of the medals collection to expose all of the mistakes that had been made under the previous doyens of the cabinet; the humiliation of the Colbert clan and Carcavi was open, and it was merciless.<sup>988</sup>

At the start of the following year, Louvois put his own youngest son in charge (known as the *Abbé Louvois*), and installed a client named Pierre Rainssant as supervisor of the collection of the medals. These objects, Louvois determined, would be separated from the library and other sorts of curiosities in the rue Vivienne and moved to Versailles.<sup>989</sup> Louvois discarded the old cabinets made by Gole (too old fashioned but non-alienable, they were given to the King's

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<sup>983</sup> Ibid, 42-43.

<sup>984</sup> Ibid.

<sup>985</sup> See Scott, 175.

<sup>986</sup> Cited in Schnapper (1993), 58.

<sup>987</sup> Leibniz, 345.

<sup>988</sup> See Sarmant (1994), 45-47.

<sup>989</sup> Ibid.

favorite legitimized son, the Duc du Maine).<sup>990</sup> He also “purged” the collection of materials that might happen to be related to Colbert’s tastes for mercantilist expansion and geography: the flora, fauna, and crafts from abroad (e.g. porcelain). Into this slimmed down ensemble of objects – clearly showcasing *history* in the form of medals – Louvois funneled large sums into producing the new trays and furnishings designed and made by Berain and Oppenordt. He also began voraciously acquiring even more medals (first Antique, then modern), and hired a team to work with Rainssant to put them in order.<sup>991</sup> It was precisely at this moment that the King appeared to gain interest in his collection and the construction of the new *cabinet* in the new palace.<sup>992</sup> Perhaps Colbert’s death and the scrutiny that Louvois cast upon his predecessor’s tenure caught Louis’ attention; perhaps the King gained more interest in the collection because the Court had installed itself at Versailles and he was eager to conclude the work there in an impressive manner. As we have seen, the cabinet would form the culmination of the public side of the palace: a glistening jewel-box that declared Louis – on historical evidence – the successor of the Emperors of the ancient world and “*un roi si grand, si aimé de ses peuples, si respecté de tous ses voisins et de ses alliés, qu'on pouvait dire qu'il était le plus heureux de tous les monarques.*”<sup>993</sup> But it was also a joint in the palace architecture between these public rooms (the *grand appartement*) and Louis’ more private (though never solitary) zone of the same palace wing (the *petit appartement*), so it perhaps generated a quite personal concern, linked in no small part to his pedagogical training.

For Louis, then, the *cabinet des médailles*, or *cabinet des curiosités*, thus may be understood as putting a vision of history and his role in it in order. The furnishing of his marvelous chamber combined the imperatives of his furniture with the functional strengths of both tabular seeing and the large table at the center of the room. In a sketch of the room made by Tessin ca. 1686, we see what may well be the now-disappeared table in the chamber’s center, directly under the oculus and in front of the window opposite the fireplace where the Neff stood. (Fig. 102) The light would have spilled in on the table’s clean and open surface, enlivening the medals strewn on it, which the King could have arranged in rows, like the paintings and shelves of sculptures and vases on the walls. One can imagine that in this room, the King could see himself clearly assembling a kind of universal history with himself at the apogee. Clutter was banished, as were practicalities of time and space. The room was, as Robert Wellington has argued, atemporal: it was *in* time, but was also the site in which historical time could be assembled and reviewed.<sup>994</sup> The table provided the king with a field of action upon which he could rehearse the lessons he’d learned as a child and see them realized, unobstructed by practicalities and details of the kinds one might encounter in a map, or a room in which the thickness of time and space made itself manifest in an accretion of materials that one could not perceive “at one glance.”

In this set-up, Couplet’s table may well have been simply in the way. Where was there room for it, when the other, much larger table was clearly the star of the show? In any case, geography manifested itself fairly weakly at Versailles in an iconographic sense. There were globes in carpets woven by the Savonnerie, and the Staircase of the Ambassadors referenced the world at large, but did so through the portrayal of figures from around the world paying tribute to

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<sup>990</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>991</sup> Ibid.

<sup>992</sup> Schnapper (1986), 198.

<sup>993</sup> Perrault, op cit.

<sup>994</sup> Wellington, 88.

the Sun King as an audience. Military-style mapping appeared at Versailles in the battle paintings by Van der Meulen (which also included globes in their ornamental frames); these were one feature of the ambassadors' staircase and also appeared scattered around the palace in different locations, just as military power ensconced itself in the garden's design so that inside and out were as tightly mapped as a fortress, though no cartographic renderings appeared.<sup>995</sup> Outdoors, the Rançois *marbrier* Hubert Misson was also paid in 1668 to sculpt a large marble globe which was engraved under the direction of Jacques Bruot, a member of the academy of sciences.<sup>996</sup> Yet these appearances of cartographic culture hardly took center stage at the palace – and they were in any case projects launched by Colbert, who sponsored and protected the science academy's mapping projects, as we have seen as part of his mercantilist policy. After a brief flicker of interest, the King seems to have perceived no need to keep a map of France in his innermost cabinet; indeed, under Louis' aegis, Louvois defunded the academicians triangulation studies, as we've discussed, and put the scientists to work bringing water for Versailles' fountains and gardens. Perhaps ironically, the client Louvois appointed to replace Colbert's team, Rainsant, drowned in one of the palace canals (the *eau des Suisses*) while strolling through the park on June 6, 1689 – apparently under the influence of opium.<sup>997</sup> Flatter didn't always mean safer.

Couplet's gift was, thus, edged out in favor of an ordering system that prioritized a historical agenda, which could be spread out on a table and easily understood. Geography was, for the King, not a top representational priority and for Louvois, the ordering of the chamber thus obviously had practical political goals and the expulsion of Couplet's table dovetailed with his agenda. By taking over the space, he inserted himself in the King's history as the man who made this unobstructed view possible. And he took over Colbert's place at the table. Quite concretely. For he moved his office that same year from the department of war into Colbert's old headquarters in the *bâtiments* in the *aille du Midi*, which had recently been competed at Versailles. He then took Colbert's desk, also made by Oppenordt, and installed it among his own affairs (including several bottles of wine kept in a purplewood cabinet, perhaps also made by Oppenordt).<sup>998</sup> In the mornings, he would meet the King in another *cabinet*, the practical pendant to the curiosities chamber: the King's *cabinet du conseil*.

There, at a large table also covered in green velour, the "historical" work of the *cabinet des médailles* became political work in the present, as the King and his advisors consulted and laid plans for action. The furnishings resembled those of the curiosity cabinet: the large table, three arm chairs, a day bed, some "*pliants*", mirror-lined walls outfitted with shelves displaying agate and other precious stone vessels.<sup>999</sup> It was at this table that the King met his political advisors, as well as courtiers, immediately after lunch. From one table to another. Saint-Simon observed that when the King met with distinguished individuals there (not his advisors), he sat at the "*bas*" and of the council table, "*qui étoit sa façon de faire quand il vouloit parler à quell*

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<sup>995</sup> On the gardens the aesthetics of siege warfare, see Mukerji (1997) and on Van der Meulen and mapping, see Robert Wellington, "The cartographic origins or Adam-Franz van der Meulen's Marly Cycle," in *Print Quarterly* 28, 2 (June, 2011), 142-155.

<sup>996</sup> See the complete accounts of Versailles at [https://archive.org/stream/gri\\_33125003583636/gri\\_33125003583636\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/gri_33125003583636/gri_33125003583636_djvu.txt), last accessed 23.11.2020 and also Alexandre Maral, *La grande commande de 1674: Chefs d'oeuvre sculptés des jardins de Versailles sous Louis XIV* (Montreuil & Versailles: Gourcuff Gradenigo & Château de Versailles, 2013).

<sup>997</sup> Sarmant (1994), 59.

<sup>998</sup> Ibid.

<sup>999</sup> Verlet (1985), 217.



*qu'un à son aise et à loisir.*"<sup>1000</sup> After dinner, again according to St. Simon, he would stand up for several minutes with his back to the foot of his bed, surrounded by the entire court; then, after making reverences to the women, passed into his cabinet, "*où en arrivant il donnoit ordre.*"<sup>1001</sup> All of these tables at Versailles, from the gaming tables in the *appartements*, to the dining table that needed to be assembled, to the office tables in the cabinets served these political purposes of visualizing order. Both in their construction and in their performative uses, they assembled statehood as a gathering of people participating in the unfolding of history: the King's history, which as his cabinet demonstrated, was magnificent, but also magnanimous, prudent, and *ordered by him*. That is what made both the King and his table stately.

### *Mapping: a new order?*

The tensions between visualizing the state as a cartographic image or as a person (the King, a historical figure) that we observed being played out in the contest for preeminence in the cabinet of curiosities at Versailles point to how divergent presentations of statehood materialized simultaneously during this period in France. Yet it would be a mistake to assume that they were not intertwined just because Couplet's table was expelled from Louis' *cabinet*. As we have seen, for instance, the display of marble at the palace was deeply linked to numerous mapping projects and called forth a kind of cartographic consciousness reiterated by texts such as Félibien's guide to Versailles, where different marbles are named along with their geographical origins. Moreover, as a military man, Louvois was reliant on the type of military mapping (as well as architectural plans and sections) produced by engineers, which as we have also seen, had been building up the image of France since Henry IV sent out teams of *ingénieurs du roi* to map the Kingdom's borders – a practice continued notably by Richelieu.<sup>1002</sup> Nicolas Sanson, whose map appears on Couplet's table is an excellent example of the ways in which the French state digested map-making under the Bourbons, producing a new image of the Kingdom that celebrated and instrumentalized mapping as an instance of what Louis Marin might dub the conflated power of representation and the representation of power under Louis XIV. As we draw the curtains on Versailles, we will consider, however, how the development of a cartographic image of France contributed not only to consolidating the King's power, but to establishing a consciousness of a common *ground* that signified "France". This ground *could* act independently of the King as a mechanism of French identity and subject creation. In other words, although mapping in France (vs. England, for instance) was deeply embedded in the establishment of the Bourbon state oriented around the figure of the monarch, it also pointed to an emerging *impersonal* state, in the

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<sup>1000</sup> Ibid, 218.

<sup>1001</sup> Ibid, 219.

<sup>1002</sup> See David Buisseret, "Monarchs, Ministers, and Maps in France before the Accession of Louis XIV" in *Monarchs, Ministers, and Maps: the emergence of cartography as a tool of government in early modern Europe*, ed. David Buisseret (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 99-123 and Monique Pelletier, *Cartographie de la France et du monde de la Renaissance au Siècle des Lumières* (Paris: Éditions de la Bibliothèque nationale de France, 2002), 9-29 and 55-80 as well as Monique Pelletier, "National and Regional Mapping in France to About 1650" in *History of Cartography: Cartography in the European Renaissance*, Vol. 3, Part 2, ed. David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1480-1503.

same way that we discussed when considering the infrastructure and politics of the French marble industry.<sup>1003</sup>

Sanson is an important and interesting character in the history of French cartography because his work aimed explicitly to extend the monarchy's control of French territory as well as to lay the foundation of a French spatial consciousness. He, more than any other contemporary cartographer, produced an image of the Kingdom for the first time as a unified, consistently scaled amalgamation of distinct, but interconnected parts.<sup>1004</sup> It is thus not difficult to transpose the logic of fragmentation and control that I argued undergirded the visual logic of marble tables and marble inlay at Versailles onto Sanson's "France" as portrayed on Couplet's table. Fig. 103-104 Unlike the types of ornamentation we discussed in the previous episode at Versailles like animal embellishment, social performance, and *compartiments*, however, Sanson's maps had very practical, utilitarian purposes. They aimed to establish a "base map" of the Kingdom, a template that could be overlaid with different types of infrastructural divisions; the same "base" was repeated with, for example, postal routes, waterways, administrative districts, ecclesiastical units, the military "*gouvernements généraux*" established by Richelieu and the newer *generalités*. The foundational map could be divided into pieces and filled with an endless amount of different information depending on what was desired.<sup>1005</sup> (Figs. 105-106) They were a kind of *rassemblement* of human, economic, and natural resources. Sanson's maps thereby played an integral role in the Bourbon attempt to consolidate control over French localities. They made use of information sent by *intendants* and other bureaucrats loyal to the central government back to Paris that he could use in his maps, in the manner we discussed for instance in the context of Colbert's forestry survey. At the same time, in repeating the same "base" image of France over and over again, Sanson's maps circulated a newly drawn image of the Kingdom that became highly recognizable to many people since the form repeated itself consistently.

Born in Abbeville in northern France, Sanson had studied with Jesuits in his youth, developing an interest in history and cartography before graduating to work as a military topographer. He established a close relationship with the Crown when Louis XIII came north on a military campaign to Sanson's home town. According to the geographer Robert de Vaugondy (a friend and heir of Sanson's grandson Pierre Moulard-Sanson),<sup>1006</sup> who published his *Essai sur l'histoire de la géographie, ou sur son origine, ses progrès et son état actuel* in 1755, Louis XIII's preferred lodging in Abbeville was the house of Sanson, who was then employed working on the city's fortifications. Vaugondy wrote that during the siege of Aire, the king selected the young Sanson's house as a base, "realizing the importance of the work of this scholar, Louis did not want him to be displaced. He asked only that they use a hidden staircase (*escalier dérobé*) so that he could move from his apartment to his geographer's study. Sanson was called several times to the king's advisory to deliberate on difficulties that presented themselves. Louis XIII

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<sup>1003</sup> For a comparison of French and English mapping culture (and the relationship of the Crown to patronage) see Christine Marie Petto, *Mapping and Charting in Early Modern England and France: Power, Patronage, and Production* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015).

<sup>1004</sup> On Sanson, see Mireille Pastoureau, *Les Atlas français XVIe-XVIIe Siècles: repertoire bibliographique et étude* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1984), Pastoureau, *Les Sanson: cent ans de cartographie française 1630-1730* (Lille: Atelier national de reproduction des thèses, 1982), Akerman (1995), 151-152, and Pelletier (2007), 1501-1502, and Jeffrey N. Peters, *Mapping Discord: allegorical cartography in early modern French writing* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 28-31 and 67-82.

<sup>1005</sup> Akerman (1995), 149-151.

<sup>1006</sup> Pastoureau (1982), 104.

gave him the title of state advisor. Such favor only made the geographer work harder.”<sup>1007</sup> He eventually became part of the architecture of state (residing with the *artisans du roi* like Oppenordt at the Louvre). Vaugaudy’s anecdote is especially evocative of the closeness between the King and the geographer. Not only does the former make the cartographer’s house his own, but the use of the hidden staircase produces a channel of direct access between the map-maker and the ruler. This is an access that circumvents the formalities of etiquette, with its formalized boundaries of entry and exit designed to impress hierarchical authority into space. Instead, the geographer and the king are interconnected through the common body of the geographer’s home. The apartment and the study, like the king and his geometer, become wrapped into the same tactical mind and *corps* even though in representational terms – in the case of Louis XIV and the cabinet of curiosities at least – maps did not appear; following Vaugaudy’s logic, one might say that they did not have to because they had been internalized for tactical rather than representational purposes.

Sanson used his connections to the central government to obtain information about local politics, producing maps for the Crown’s purposes, like taxes, since he was the first to map France in terms of the administrative *generalités* (the financial divisions that became increasingly important during the reign of Louis XIV). (Fig. 107) Breaking French space into these units enabled Sanson to provide the state with information that could be used to tighten control of resources and finances– even though Sanson was an armchair geographer who did not travel with measuring instruments to far-flung locations like the scientists of the *Académie*. His maps thus had a different kind of use value than the academicians’ calculation of longitude. Monique Pelletier, the French cartography historian, has observed specifically that what Sanson’s maps offered was a particular type of comfort: “Sanson’s maps,” she writes, “provided a reassuring vision of domesticated and rationalized areas whose boundaries seemed to enclose peoples and give them security.”<sup>1008</sup> They were the tools of a good *mesnager*. What his work shared though with the politics of etiquette and manners we saw on display around tables at Versailles is that they were both predicated upon the same division of space as a mode of managing the social body through the imposition of a grammar that was both visual and embodied. They were part of a controlling logic that figured the state as an image of clearly defined, interlocking parts dominated by a shared rule, a doubling in the cartographer’s case between the rule of measurement and the rule of the King.

As a cartographer trying to earn a living, Sanson’s projects in these formative, mid-century years for French cartography were, however, two-pronged. Certain projects, as we have said, aimed for detail and coverage for royal administrative use, while others addressed a larger audience and were of an explicitly pedagogical nature. The latter aimed to teach a broader public both about the world and how to learn about the world, that is, how to both receive and assimilate information. These were not lessons for the King, but for a public increasingly attuned to new news channels bringing information in at a rapid pace from afar.<sup>1009</sup>

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<sup>1007</sup> Robert de Vaugondy, *Essai sur l’histoire de la géographie, ou sur son origine, ses progress, et son état actuel* (Paris: Chez Antoine Boudet, 1755), 219-20. Translation Peters, 77.

<sup>1008</sup> Pelletier (2007), 1499.

<sup>1009</sup> On the growing circulation of the news in the early modern period, see e.g. Andrew Pettegree, *The Invention of the News: How the World Came to Know about Itself* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014). For France specifically see for instance Howard M. Solomon, *Public Welfare, Science and Propaganda in 17<sup>th</sup>-Century France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015) and André Bello, “New Exchange and Social Distinction” in *New Networks in Early Modern Europe*, Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 375- 394.

For Sanson, this was a means of expanding the market for his work and he began to offer public geography lessons in Paris during the 1650s.<sup>1010</sup> The means that he proposed for a broader audience to absorb the detailed information his maps provided were tables. Much like his maps fragmented space (into provinces, or administrative units, for example), so too did tables break up information about geography into digestible units. Like the King's history lessons *en abrégé*, Sanson's geographical lessons expunged complexity in order to furnish a visual schema that enabled the quick and easy absorption of information because it was presented in neat boxes and columns. This was true for text as well as cartographic material. In his 1644 *Description de la France*, for instance, Sanson begins with a thick description of the country, before breaking it down into units like arch-bishoprics, local parliaments, etc., which he in turn breaks down into smaller and smaller units. After the introductory description of France as a whole, each smaller unit-section is bounded by lines (tables, containing lists), like *compartiments* in a decorative scheme. These smaller units eliminate the complexity of the introductory text and the formal qualities of the tables makes it easier to ingest and remember the information presented. (Figs. 108) These techniques accorded with the strategies devised for the King's childhood history lessons, closely resembling the directive of Comenius on how to use vision in order to effectively process information:

We will now speak of the mode in which objects must be presented to the senses, if the impression is to be distinct. This can be readily understood if we consider the process of actual vision. If the object is to be clearly seen it is necessary: (1) that it be placed before the eyes; (2) not far off, but at a reasonable distance; (3) not on one side, but straight before the eyes ; and (4) so that the front of the objects be not turned away from, but directed towards the observer ; (5) that the eyes first take in the object as a whole; (6) and then proceed to distinguish the parts ; (7) inspecting these in order from the beginning to the end; (9) that attention be paid to each and every part; (9) until they are all *grasped* by means of their essential attributes. If these requisites be properly observed, vision takes place successfully; but if one be neglected its success is only partial.<sup>1011</sup>

The textual tables achieved clarity of vision by breaking information down systematically, emptying it of confusing elements (things that might be seen from the "side"). Sanson's maps did the very same thing: they presented the world as a set of bounded units. These could be filled with information gleaned from the textual tables. In that manner, the compartments of the tables were transferred to the "*compartiments*" on the map: continents, polities, provinces, cities: a Russian doll of ever increasing units. In the words of the French cartography historian Mireille Pastoreau, "by maintaining consistent construction, format, and scale", Sanson outfitted the world (and the student's mind) with a kind of psychic and spatial coherence "since all the territories were carefully divided by diagrammatic borders, giving the impression of spaces perfectly controlled intellectually."<sup>1012</sup>

These tabular units were in a way not terribly dissimilar from the King's desk in the sense that the royal piece of furniture was structured a blank plane bolstered by organized sets of drawers that could be opened and closed in order to extract information, which would be laid

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<sup>1010</sup> The lectures took place in Paris on Wednesdays in 1655. Pastoreau (1997), 116-117.

<sup>1011</sup> Cited in Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 95.

<sup>1012</sup> Pastoreau (1997), 117.

upon the flat, bounded tabletop. The ordered contents of the drawers supported a field of mental action that played itself out in the form of arranging discrete units on a blank surface. In the case of the desk, this field was a wooden, velour-lined board; in the case of the geography student's mind, the field was a Cartesian *cogito*, which expanded by multiplying the boxes that undergirded it. In the *Discours de la Méthode*, the philosopher wrote, "my plan was to find grounds for assurance and to reject quicksand and mud in order to find rock or clay": the enclosure of his *poêle* in Amsterdam provided the means by which his mind could extend, thanks to its total *compartmentalization*.<sup>1013</sup> As we noted at the outset of our episode at Versailles, Furetière pointed out this very conjunction in his dictionary: *Voilà une table rase disposée à recevoir tout ce qu'on voudra... On die aussi au figure d'un ecolier, qu'on met au College, que son esprit est une belle table d'attente...* The geographer's *escalier dérobé* ran between the material and rhetorical construction of the King's power-desk and the students' heads.

A series of atlases produced by Sanson makes this process of expansion buttressed by compartmentalization manifest since the atlases' coverage kept growing, expanding ultimately to include the whole globe. (Fig. 109) In the first recorded version of the atlas work, from 1652, Sanson's volume included just one map of Asia, one of Africa, and one of America.<sup>1014</sup> Europe dominated, and within Europe, France was the most present and best documented state of all (it was also obviously the polity about which Sanson had the most information). By 1658, the atlas had grown to include 113 maps in total, including now nine of Asia, eight of Africa, seventy-seven of Europe and sixteen maps of Ancient geography.<sup>1015</sup> In 1667, Sanson died, but this did not prevent his son Guillaume from seeing through the third edition of his father's atlas, this time including over two hundred plates. Built into Sanson's world view was an implicit process of ordering according to hierarchy: top-down. At the same time, the tables flattened complexity and made information available to a growing amateur audience.

These pedagogical methods proved to be popular, presumably because they indeed facilitated the absorption of knowledge.<sup>1016</sup> Sanson's maps became the standard visualization of France and his tables became a method through which many Frenchmen and women learned about the world in this period.<sup>1017</sup> Internalizing the images and information offered a means by which they could find their place within that world, with France as its epistemological and geographical center. These pedagogical practices spawned numerous other models for learning about geography, which were both innovative and popular. Sanson's nephew, Pierre Duval, for

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<sup>1013</sup> Translation Peters, 19. On Descartes' cogito and French mapping, see Conley (1997), 279-301.

<sup>1014</sup> In the same year, Sanson also published an inventory of his work known as the *Cartes, tables, et traités de géographie que le Sr Sanson, geographe ordinaire du Roy a fait graver & imprimer à diverses fois et en divers temps*.

<sup>1015</sup> Pastoureau (1982), 96.

<sup>1016</sup> Pastoureau has observed that the first French atlases (beginning with Bouguereau in 1594) were not pedagogical; Bouguereau's was aimed, for instance, at Henri IV. In the 1640s, the Jesuits realized that both they and the monarchy shared an interest in good maps and citizens who knew both the geography of France and the world. The Jesuit priest Philippe Briet composed an atlas in 1648 (*Parallela geographia veteris et novae*), which was illustrated with 144 maps and spanned ancient and modern geography, though modern maps were more plentiful. This book was explicit in its pedagogical aims: it included blank grids with latitude and longitudinal gradations that could be filled in with maps of France that the Jesuits' students would draw. Perhaps thanks to his training with the Jesuits, Sanson, and later Duval, made maps that used these methods and combined them with nomenclature, standardizing space through both visualization processes and naming. The largest names gave way to the smallest, and these named were often copied and imitated. Vaugondy wrote in his 1755 tract that with Sanson's tables, one "needs no more than eyes and maps." See Ibid, 116-118.

<sup>1017</sup> Ibid.

instance, took up the tabular impulse in his father-in-law's work and turned his maps into table games. These took the form of the game of the goose (*jeu de l'oie*), a board game like snakes and ladders that had become increasingly popular beginning at the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>1018</sup> (Fig. 110) Duval's invention divided Sanson's maps into their constitutive units positioned along a spiraling road that moved from the outside of the board toward the middle. A group of players began at the game's "door", tossing money into a common pot in the center. (Fig. 111) To win, you had to be the first to arrive in the center of the board. There were obstacles along the way which made the game interesting: you might lose a turn, or get sent forward, or backward or have to pay various fines. Duval's innovation was to transform the spiraling path of the goose game into an interactive cartographic experience, collapsing the space of the game table into the space of a map. He morphed Sanson's pedagogical tables into a table (board) game.

Each player was conjoined as a member of a community who shared a common acceptance of the game's rules and who proceeded, by rolling dice, to learn about the world while moving around the maps spread across the board game. (Fig. 112) Submitting to a common "rule" enabled the players to build knowledge about the world *together* so that a sense for geography conjoined with a sense of shared subjectivity.<sup>1019</sup> Duval inserted a political narrative into his games by linking them to current events. In 1659 – while France was still at war with Spain – he published a *Jeu de la France* in which the community of players traversed all of the French provinces, which served as the compartments building the spiral path. At the center of the game he placed a map of France as a whole, such that it was framed by the path of individually delineated (and in some versions colored) provinces. These included the frontier provinces, some of which were outfitted with special instructions like Ponthieu (square 3). The player who lands there, we are told, must make haste to "take the *poste*" and hurry to the Isle de France (square 8) to bring news of the progress of the King's armies. The player who lands on Champagne, by contrast, will pay a fee for the upkeep of the "*places frontières*." Players were thereby interpolated by the game as good citizens, who contribute to the state in several ways: they pay fees to the "central" authority, they obey the laws (of the game, printed and sold with the permission of the King), and they use the geographic knowledge they assemble to further the state's political ambitions.<sup>1020</sup> In this sense, they resembled the gaming tables at the King's *appartements*.

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<sup>1018</sup> On the game of the goose and geography, see Lebens (2016), 105-145, Adrian Seville, *The Cultural Legacy of the Royal Game of the Goose: 400 years of Printed Board Games* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2019). On Duval generally see Pastoreau (1986) 135-163 and on the goose game in France specifically, Alain R. Girard & Claude Quélet, *L'Histoire de France racontée par le jeu de l'Oie* (Paris: Ballard/Massin, 1982).

<sup>1019</sup> The common subjectivity is simultaneously that which the game builds and the precondition for playing the game. This is what makes the game of the goose such an excellent example how ideological interpellation, as described by Althusser in terms of entering a doorway (i.e. entering the game board), and finding what one expects to find inside. As Althusser describes, one knocks on the door at a friend's house, "We all have friends who, when they knock on our door and we ask, through the door, the question 'Who's there?', answer (since 'it's obvious') 'It's me'. And we recognize that 'it is him', or 'her'. We open the door, and 'it's true, it really was she who was there.' To take another example, when we recognize somebody of our (previous) acquaintance ((re)-*connaissance*), we show him that we have recognized him (and have recognized that he has recognized us) by saying to him 'Hello, my friend', and shaking his hand (a material ritual practice of ideological recognition in everyday life – in France, at least)..." Louis Althusser, "On the Reproduction of the Conditions of Production," in "*Lenin and Philosophy*" and *Other Essays*, trans. Ben Breuster (Monthly Review Press, 1971), <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm>, last accessed 04.12.2020.

<sup>1020</sup> On variations in seventeenth-century thought about whether travel was potential virtue or vice, see Gábor Gelléri, "Handbooks for the Courtier and Handbooks for the Traveller: Intersections of Two Forms of Early Modern

But they differed from those tables in an important respect: aside from the mention of the privilege he granted to the game's publisher, the King himself was absent. At Versailles, it was the sight of the King mingling with the Court that the *Mercure Galant* described as proof of his "highness": the "lowering" of himself demonstrated his true greatness (*Le Roy... descendant de leur grandeur... Sa presence console ceux qui perdent; & ceux qui gagnent ont tant de Plaisir en le voyant, qu'ils oublient meme leur gain, pour donner toutes leurs pensées à la gloire qu'ils reçoivent...*).<sup>1021</sup> At the table where Duval's players gathered, however, the King was a hovering but ultimately *invisible* presence, the master of all France's tables: geographical *and* literal tables like the surface upon which the game was played, but marginalized in Duval's game board because the map took center stage. Art historian Richard Tawes has written, "The rigid directionality enforced and exaggerated by *the jeu de l'oie*'s simple spiral structure made it an ideal means with which to advocate conformity to a system of social and political rules. It appeared especially suited to the establishment or maintenance of orthodoxy, ordering a narrative whose conclusion was desired and inevitable, and whose playing was in no way transgressive, but rather a mnemonic to a dogmatic truth."<sup>1022</sup> But the vehicle by which the community came closer to one another when playing Duval's goose games was arguably not the King, but the map, which *furnished* the ground that the players shared. Geography offered a means of producing a common body of knowledge in which winning was predicated upon luck and information, not birth or privileged access to the monarch's body at Versailles.

Perhaps this goes some way to explaining the dismissal of Couplet's table from the cabinet of curiosity as a site of state representation. The King is present in Couplet's table; it was a gift to him, after all. Couplet took pains to position the map as an opportunity for the King to see how much he could gain by sponsoring mapping; he also took pains to frame the potential gifts of geography in historical terms so that the table *cum* map offers a modern concept of territorial control alongside more traditional notions of heroic majesty (i.e. the reference to Virgil). Yet maps by Sanson like that on the table also had a life divorced from the monarch, even if they depended on his patronage in order to be produced and sold.

Duval's innovative goose games are, in a way, a case in point. They themselves are explicit in their embrace of Bourbon politics. Yet the collaborative table experience they built was easily translated during the revolution into a non-monarchic, but similar experience of France as a game of the goose. A *jeu de l'oie* from ca. 1830 is, thus, entitled the *Jeu de la Révolution Française* and uses the game's form to present a historical spiral leading toward Louis XVI's signing of the constitution at the *Assemblée Nationale* in 1791. (Fig. 113) The final square on the game board is an image of a square table, laid with a cloth and labeled with the 63, which marks the end of the game.<sup>1023</sup> (Fig. 114) This plain table is positioned next to another table at right, which is round. Both tables are empty and they stand in for the space of the game itself, whose players have become historical actors participating in the overthrow of the

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Advice Literature" in *Artes Apodemicae and Early Modern Travel Culture, 1550-1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 148-163.

<sup>1021</sup> *Mercure Galant* (1682), 48-49.

<sup>1022</sup> Richard Tawes, "Wargaming: Visualizing Conflict in French Printed Boardgames" in *Visual Culture and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, Satish Padiyar, Philip Shaw, and Philippa Simpson eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 59.

<sup>1023</sup> As Seville and others who write on the goose game have observed, numbers like six, three, and nine had Kabbalistic associations, as well as perhaps Christian ones: here the 63 makes nine, a perfect Christian trinity, as well as an apt (and equal 3 x 3) division of the state between the three estates and *liberté, fraternité, égalité*. See Seville (2019).

monarchy: they are not only re-enacting history, but collaborating in *making* it while playing the game at their shared table. This game has thus turned the tables on Louis' historical "games" in the *cabinet des médailles*. But the conditions of possibility for the common consciousness that this game evokes find an early, but entirely covert, echo in mapping games by geographers like Duval. Although the latter's goose games were fervently monarchic, they nonetheless established a potential for a common ground to liberate itself from the King by offering geography as a table experience shared by a field of players whose hierarchy has been flattened by the throw of the dice. In 1789, a proposal was launched to build a colossal tactile world globe in the Bois de Boulogne, forty-seven meters in diameter.<sup>1024</sup> The map, replete with cities, mountains, and rivers sculpted in relief would enable the people to "freely" get in touch with a *ground* that they shared. The proposal was rejected, but the message was clear: geography was to be something experienced on an equal playing field; the French state (and indeed the world) no longer needed the figure of the monarch and his furniture in order to be legible. *His* frame was no longer the *chassis* that framed a world view. The map, or the globe, could take over and stand in for states, and their citizens, on their own. "We are the world."<sup>1025</sup> The tables in the 1830 *Jeu de la Révolution*, however, suggest that *tables* nonetheless remained crucial as a site of mediation and gathering for this new vision of statehood. They offered each individual both a rhetorical and a literal new seat at the table of state. The game, the table, history, and the state itself were now not the King's prerogatives, but the creation of anyone playing.

By the time the *Jeu de la Révolution* was made, Couplet's table had left Versailles; it was recorded still at the Trianon on the first and second of June, 1794 before being marked for the *depot de Versailles* on 2 Thermidor (the twentieth of July) that same year.<sup>1026</sup> In 1826, it had made its way into the Tuileries, where the Louis' grand hardstone *stipi* and other magnificent Gobelins creations had once been on display. Napoleon III moved it to the Élysée Palace in 1855 and at some point along the way, the table received a new base. This base was no longer a Gobelins' production: instead, it was a pastiche of various styles of the type we are familiar with from the nineteenth century.<sup>1027</sup> (Fig. 115) Following Louis XIV, the hegemony of Kingly style had waned; in the nineteenth century, there was never a centralized power with enough of a monopoly on style to make a single formal paradigm dominant. Taste and choice on a diverse market replaced the authority of the King, even in times in which the monarchy was restored in France.<sup>1028</sup> It then moved to the Louvre in 1870, where Couplet's table became an object shared in a new way, part of a common culture and a collective repository of knowledge and history. In these new surroundings, Couplet's table top sometimes even detached itself from its base, moving to the wall where it assumed the format of a map, or a painting, its ordering power

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<sup>1024</sup> Marcel Destombes, "Globes en Relief du XVIIIe Siècle" in *Der Globusfreund*, Nr. 25/27, Festschrift zum 25 jährigen Bestand des Coronelli-Weltbundes der Glubusfreunde (May/MAI 1978 (für 1977/78/79)), 225-231

<sup>1025</sup> This did not mean an erasure of borders, however. The rhetoric of natural limits and frontiers persisted and indeed supported expansionist French revolutionary politics. See Peter Sahlins, "Natural Frontiers Revisited: France's Boundaries since the Seventeenth Century" in *The American Historical Review*, Dec., 1990, Vol. 95, No. 5 (Dec., 1990), 1423-1451.

<sup>1026</sup> The object files are at Versailles and were kindly provided by archivist Christine Desgrez and curator Alexandre Maral, who generously scanned them during the Covid-19 period and delivered them to me digitally in 2020.

<sup>1027</sup> The base is listed in the museum files of Versailles as being made by *ébéniste* Guillaume Grohé (1808-1885) around 1860. It is made of oak, pear, nut wood, and gilded. OA2452 Versailles, currently located in the *Salon de l'Abondance*.

<sup>1028</sup> See Auslander, 141-254.



truncated, or beheaded like the French King.<sup>1029</sup> (Fig. 116) This deposed King, who had actually turned Louis XIV's gleaming monument to the Bourbons as the apex of history into a billiard salon, spent his final days in the prison of the Temple. There, he passed the grim hours cutting up maps into pieces like the stones of a mosaic. He would then place them on a table "*successivement et en ordre*".<sup>1030</sup> This order, like the table, was no longer *his*. The map now dictated the order. Louis XVI did so under the eyes of his young student, his daughter Madame Royale, who herself is said to have become an excellent *géographe*.<sup>1031</sup> (Fig. 117)

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<sup>1029</sup> That is how it was presented in 2018 at the *Visitors to Versailles* exhibitions both in France and in New York at the Metropolitan Museum.

<sup>1030</sup> Mormiche, 426.

<sup>1031</sup> *Ibid.*

## Finishing Touches

“To live together in the world,” Hannah Arendt wrote, “means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it.” We began “*On the Table*” with those words, and the table that we saw represented both as a board game and as a depiction *in* the board game at the end of the *Jeu de la Révolution* was a manifestation of exactly this type of political Arendtian table: something man-made and shared. This table furnished a space of “appearance,” that is a *public* space in the sense of a space held in common, in which those who gather are mutually heard and seen; in game lingo we might say that they are equal “players.” This, for Arendt, was the political power of the classic *republican* table: a top made by human hands and held aloft and steady by a set of equally distributed legs. The equal height of each leg and their equidistance from a material center were the prerequisites for the maintenance of a shared political reality that was solid and planar, not warped and tilted to offer certain legs advantageous angles and loopholes. Crucially for Arendt, this shared material reality was not anti-agonistic, but rather gathered disputes so that they could be resolved politically, that is *publicly* (in common) and not through private dealings in the backroom. Secret deals and systems of unequal distribution of the right to be seen and heard would corrupt the table’s strength and cause the tabletop to come crashing down and its legs to fall “over each other.”

Arendt’s powerful description of the table as a political metaphor dovetails perfectly with the rhetorical table of the French revolutionary game, or with Gerard ter Borch’s depiction of the Westphalian peace accords, wherein a table heralds the means by which a community of agonistic states and interests were able to come to an unexpected accord. True, sometimes the achievement of a table agreement meant speaking to one’s own echo chamber, as we saw to be the case when Ottomans and Habsburgs gathered. In these cases, the table (or *sofra*) could bridge cultures and political imperatives, while also maintaining the illusion of autonomy. Only because they could unite but also separate were tables, in fact, Arendtian political instruments *par excellence*, hence their remarkable flourishing in the visual rhetoric and actual staging of early modern peace conferences.

This, however, is only one dimension of the political life that tables furnished in the early modern period. As we have seen when visiting Bess of Hardwick’s Eglantine table in the Great High Chamber of Hardwick New Hall, tables in early modern England were also a means of articulating dynastic and property claims. Tables carried great meaning in early modern English homes precisely because they were not ubiquitous. Their scarcity meant that they truly could make a statement. In Tudor England, tables gathered estates and people together in a manner that affirmed the ownership and hierarchical control of the table’s “head.” They thus could serve as pictures (“tables”) of that head, and in the case of Bess’s Eglantine table, they could inlay personal biography into a larger spatial and social mosaic. The personal became political in a world where the possession of property meant political status. For Bess, as a Tudor woman, the assembling of property was a means of creating *her* own place, one that would also assure her children access to political power in the future, a privilege that would forever be indelibly linked to her as an intrepid and unusual woman. She willed her table to stay in in the place she built.

Tudor tables were not egalitarian, but hierarchical. In a sense, though, the English *dormant* (or long table) did traditionally offer a means to *publicly* articulate a social body in which the table’s “legs” (i.e. the members of an estate) gathered to visually and aurally affirm the

standing social order; tables were *joiners*. The table, in this guise, created a venue for “appearance” in order to turn space into “place,” that is to say, to submit a multivalent and potentially contested space to a representational order that affirmed a hegemonic hierarchy of classed control. In the Tudor period, this type of representational power over space was increasingly making itself manifest in the form of estate maps, which offered a property owner an overview of his (or her) “owne.” In the period when Bess’s Eglantine table was made, the cartographic overview accompanied new articulations of visualizing property both on a map and in the home. Controlling “the view” outside also appears to have fostered new ways of controlling and defining interior space. Thus new modes of “viewing” began to conjoin with new modes of social gathering in homes, and this appears to have found expression in the triumph of new types of tables like the gate-leg. These flexible, intimate, and round table forms embedded authority into space in new and increasingly private ways. Instead of gathering an entire estate around them so that each member could see and hear one another, the gate-leg table retreated upstairs into the rarified upper-regions of the English manor house. The table’s proverbial head thereby cloaked itself under a mantle of invisibility and exclusivity, while simultaneously putting its power to retreat from the public gaze on display. Hospitality gave way to the harmonious pleasures of sociable “entertaining.”

When we turned to Versailles, we saw how one table’s hardstone mosaic brought us to understand representations of the “state” of France in incredibly complex ways. What was a state? And what did it look like? Couplet’s table, like all tables at the Sun King’s Versailles made quite specific claims on how stateliness could be embodied. These claims were staked through materiality, resources, juridical control, ritual performance, iconography, ornament and the collaboration of an army of actors. Couplet’s table, I suggested moreover, appeared at a juncture in which crucial new developments were taking place that positioned stately representation between history and geography, as well as between personal and impersonal models of governance. The tables at Versailles thus did some truly delicate leg work. They simultaneously were indelibly related to Louis XIV’s person (like a “power desk” with an *en gorge* tailored to his body) *and* part of his “office” as monarch. The latter meant that they were inalienable and belonged not to him personally, but to the state and its attendant *ordres, corps*, and *états*. They were his, but *more* than his.

The way they were manufactured needed to communicate this and give order to a state that otherwise may have been difficult to visualize, like pieces of a *pietra dura* mosaic before they have been laid into a recognizable pattern. Tables, thus, were an ordering force; they not only reflected social order, but formed it. Tables maneuvered their bodies — and the King’s — in a way that conjoined person and space; they gathered people around them (and the King), but also gathered the materials and resources needed to create them. Moreover, tables not only reflected the personal might and magnificence of the monarch, but also embodied claims about France as a space, one that was bounded, fortified, unified, and geographically and socially intelligible. This space, the King’s tables proposed, and indeed orchestrated, was one that orbited around the figure of the King like the furnishings of a room at Versailles revolved around magnificent hard-stone tables in their centers.

That this image was not coeval with the reality on the ground is clear, but that is also what tables do: they lift information from the ground, abstract it, and arrange it in a seemingly coherent and legible order. Tables are at once related to the ground and separate from it. Hence, following their visit to Versailles and Couplet’s table, Louis XIV and his son the Dauphin gifted the Siamese King Phra Narai twelve “marble tables with sculpted and gilded stands” (among

other precious objects), and Louvois and Colbert's son Seignelay also presented the embassy with "six large tables in oval *jaspé* marble," as well as "four large marble tables, with their frames and sculpture stands entirely gilded."<sup>1032</sup> Like a very large Savonnerie carpet that the Marquis also sent, these tables were presentations of the French state in multiple ways: they were a literal piece of French ground, embodiments of the King's control of resources on the ground, an ideal image of the boundedness and unity of the French kingdom as well as a manifestation of the power and *éclat* of the King himself, qualities that inhered in the marble. These objects were also intended to serve as a foundation for future trade; they were "samples" both in the sense of "*échantillon*" of French ground and examples of French technological and artisanal ingenuity. They were a kind of wish or proposal for order, prosperity, mastery, coherence, and continuity.

That Louis XIV's marble tables were antithetical to the Arendtian notion of the table as a republican, or democratic instrument seems clear. Yet there is a way in which they introduce a central conundrum of political philosophy that curiously overlaps with the production of table culture at the close of the seventeenth century. This issue is what this conclusion to "On the Table" will start to unfold, by way of closure. When Couplet gifted the King his marble table in the 1680s, the strict representational court culture of Versailles was at its zenith. Nothing was placed willy-nilly, and nothing was really comfortable. Why should it be? Was the state supposed to be "comfortable"? Representation, as we've seen, meant rank and order, and this had nothing to do with convenience. And yet, at the *appartements*, the *Mercure Galant* told its readers that nothing was incommodious, a word whose opposite, "*commode*" was increasingly coming into vogue in the last decades of the century. Joan deJean has shown that it was precisely during this period of regimented grandeur at Versailles that a culture of French *commodité* was fomenting at court.<sup>1033</sup> A coterie of young nobles, led by the Dauphin, increasingly was drawn to creating spaces that were more intimate and more personal than the "parade" chambers of state. The Princess Palatine complained of these spaces and the lax upholding of hierarchical etiquette because "comfort" in the form of more informal furnished infrastructures implied a loosening of the representational order: "At Trianon... all the men now sit down in the presence of M. the Dauphin and Madame the Duchesse de Bourgogne... You can't imagine what it's like here because it no longer looks at all like a court."<sup>1034</sup>

Where people were sitting on new sorts of upholstered chairs (*fauteuils*, *cabriolets*, *bergères*, *duchesses*, *sofas*, and more), new types of tables appeared seemingly out of thin air (but actually from the Faubourg St. Antoine and the workshops at the Louvre) to make the sitters' lives more convenient. Suddenly, all kinds of highly specialized tables invaded first the French interior, and then all of Europe. These small tables allowed for some previously unthinkable things: one could, for instance, simply empty the contents of one's pockets onto a table known as a *vide-poches* that stood in one's "private" apartment. Bedside tables appeared (*tables de chevet*), specially designed to accommodate one's nocturnal necessities (these would be outfitted with marble, for sanitary reasons, and discrete doors so that nobody would see a full chamber pot). In places where one was having tea, or newly fashionable drinks like chocolate or coffee, one could rely on the assistance of a *table à collation*, or a *table à déjeuner*, or other types of lightweight and mobile *meubles volants* (flying), *portants* (portable), and *ambulant* (walking). (Fig. 1) You needed to write something? A small writing table practically walked over

<sup>1032</sup> The *Mercure Galant* cited in Knothe (2008), 50.

<sup>1033</sup> De Jean, 2009; see also Olivier Le Goff, *L'invention du confort. Naissance d'une forme sociale* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1994).

<sup>1034</sup> Cited in *Ibid*, 12.

to you so you could express yourself freely. These *tables à écrire* were extremely light-weight versions of the King's power desk, or that object-formerly-known-as-a-table which became the *bureau plat*. The same object-formerly-known-as-a-table also gave birth to the "*commode*" a console table outfitted with drawers, developed first by A.C. Boulle for the Dauphin. How convenient: one didn't need to stoop in order to put one's belongings into a trunk, but could simply plop them in a drawer, lock them, and place something decorative on top of the commode to produce a charming "*agrément*" of color and material. (Fig. 2) They took their place under large mirrors, like consoles had once done. These mirrors reflected the commodious surroundings back upon themselves, so that an entire universe of newly upholstered comfort proliferated *ad infinitum*. Through the looking glass, the closed drawers of the commode perhaps appeared even more tantalizing: they concealed while the flat mirror revealed.

Once these astonishing new objects appeared, they necessitated a stream of other new and marvelously convenient objects, tethered to the brand new idea espoused by late seventeenth-century French architectural manuals that architecture should not be magnificent, but *commode*. If you had a *table à collation* to serve you coffee, you probably also needed an *étagère*, or shelf, to store the attractive porcelain cups, saucers, tea or coffeepot, and other accoutrements that would migrate to the collation table when it was set up. In this manner, newly private, intimate, and commodious interiors filled ineluctably with more and more commodities, a word itself linked to the notion of comfort, or "*commodité*." All of these small tables were of course commodities themselves, and they conveniently provided a ground support on which the new landscape of commodities could accrue.

A painting like François Boucher's 1739 *The Breakfast* provides a text-book example of one of these new comfortable multi-tabled new interiors, where small gatherings of people relax and enjoy sitting around together. (Fig. 3) A silver coffee pot (held by a butler) and a lacquered *table à collation* occupy the center of the image. They are the mechanism that draws the group together, as art historian Ewa Lajer-Burcharth has observed.<sup>1035</sup> This is not an Arendtian gathering, even though the table purports to serve the function of assembling a social unit on seemingly equal footing (minus the servant who is improbably smushed between the fireplace and a shelf outfitted with a Buddha statuette of the sort sold at Gersaint's boutique *À la Pagode*). This room is private, and the relationships are pointedly not agonistic. They are harmonious, comfortable, and in this particular painterly articulation of the new French private life, we are given to understand that this harmony itself is pleasurable. We are not looking at *homo politicus*, but rather *homo economicus*; the social community assembles through the vehicle of the table in order to enjoy a world of commodities that appears to cater to their needs and desires. The gathering does not stand, as they would have in the 1680s at court, but are seated. Only the butler and his silent counterparts, the tables, stand: as if summoned, they balance the diners' breakfast, and — at left — do double duty as a marble support for a Chinese vase set in French gilt mounts and a surface on which someone has conveniently discarded a ribbon that nonchalantly hangs over the table's edge: unthinkable in the *grands appartements* at Versailles! Everything in this scene bespeaks a fluid sort of agree-ability, orchestrated through the circulation of commodities intended to make their owners' lives more *commode*.

One might say that the fluid aspects of the painting present life as a laissez-faire sort of commodity flow, which tables both embody and enable. The forms of the objects themselves

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<sup>1035</sup> Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, *The Painter's Touch: Boucher, Chardin, Fragonard* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 50-51.

expressed this sense of boundless commercial and social flow. Instead of the pointy and singular *moulures* like *bec de corbin* that patrolled the edges of the Sun King's marble tables, the new tables like the marble-topped one at left in *The Breakfast* sport a kind of rippling molded edge. Not one but at least five gently curving rolls bridge the table's edge, joining it to its gilded wooden support. The boundary between marble and wood seems to disappear, rhetorically and physically, just as the silky pink ribbon dangles easily from the table's top into space, moving from one surface to another like an erotic vector, or drawstring.

Even the type of marble used most frequently in the 18th century changed. Instead of Rance and Grand Incarnat from Caunes, the marble of choice became Brèche d'Alep, which was not from Syria but instead from a property belonging to the Marquis de Galifet nearby Aix-en-Provence.<sup>1036</sup> Also known as "Harlequin" marble, this marble featured multicolored pastel splotches in red, gray, and various yellows which meant that it harmonized well with any number of materials, including lacquerware from China and Japan. In a commode by Jacques Dubois at the Musée Carnavalet (ca. 1745), the ochres and muted reds of the Brèche d'Alep top pick up the reds, yellows, and olive tones of the Chinese lacquerware front, where gilded handles and keyholes echo the swirling forms of the lacquer rocks, branches, and leaves. (Figs. 4-5) In a similar commode by Jean Deforges from ca. 1750, a Japanese lacquer front appears at first glance coherent thanks to the consistent spread of patterning in the marble top and the gilt ornamentation: a giant rocailles lock that spans the commode's entire front apron holds it visually together, providing a kind of visual integrity and unity. Upon closer inspection, however, one realizes that the lacquer panel has actually been cut up and reconfigured, but the decorative consistency is so appealing that ruptures and borders cease to be immediately apparent. The nets and frames that enclosed Louis XIV-style Gobelins designs have disappeared and given way to a kind of truly, in this case, illusion of global flow.

This flow is sensual, but decidedly economic in nature. This is evident in each table pictured in Boucher's image, since each table is a support for some sort of commodity that beckons us to consume it with our eyes, nose, hands, or mouth. The small lacquered breakfast table, for example, has raised edges to make sure that the saucers and sugars do not tumble onto the floor, the better that we can identify each object on its surface and ensure we imbibe the hot coffee with no spillage. The table also has a small drawer, which seems to open up in order to reveal more hidden goodies buried inside, a kind of *mise-en-abîme* of possibilities to be opened, discovered, and enjoyed. The silky lacquer surface practically demands touching, so that the texture can be savored alongside the feel of the cold porcelain cups and the warm steam of the coffee laid out on the table's top.

Touch, here, and surface refinement appear to be the key words that accompany *commodité*. This is no accident. For in the place of the strict hierarchy of court, manners and with them *tact* have taken center stage as the socio-political mechanisms that organize this new world of seemingly boundless commodious flow.<sup>1037</sup> As commodities proliferated and permeating a wide spectrum of classes, habits changed, as did social relations.<sup>1038</sup> Social distinctions began to blur, as Voltaire noted in 1736 when he wrote that "one sees in England and in France, by hundred channels circulating abundance. The taste of luxury enters all ranks."<sup>1039</sup> This social

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<sup>1036</sup> Cochet, 39.

<sup>1037</sup> See Lajer-Burcharth, 14-15.

<sup>1038</sup> See for example Daniel Roche, *A History of Everyday Things: the Birth of Consumption in France 1600-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>1039</sup> Cited in Lajer-Burcharth, 28.

slippage, echoed formally by table-furniture like the objects described above, had multiple implications. One of these was that *manners* became increasingly politically important in mediating and expanding cosmos of sociability. This leads us back to the aforementioned political conundrum.

Political historian John Pocock has described the shift that took place in political thought during the period (from ca. 1680–1780) in which these types of tables developed as one in which, at least in the English case, “the central question...was not whether a ruler might be resisted for misconduct, but whether a regime founded on patronage, public debt, and professionalization of the armed forces did not corrupt both governors and governed; and corruption was a problem in virtue, not in right...Political thought therefore moves decisively, though never irrevocably, out of the law-centered paradigm and into the paradigm of virtue and corruption.”<sup>1040</sup> What Pocock refers to here is a shift in orientation regarding one of the fundamental questions that emerged in the Italian states during the Renaissance: what constitutes freedom (and citizenship) and by which means political autonomy is to be obtained. When Charles I of England stood on the scaffold, he fulminated that the people could have liberty, but that this did not mean they needed to participate in governance.<sup>1041</sup> He could say so because, to speak very generally, in a legal-based paradigm, freedom and liberty (in French originally “*bourgeoisie*”) was something that the sovereign granted: The liberty to be free was a legal concession, as when Louis XIV granted the craftsmen at the Gobelins, the Louvre, and the Faubourg St. Antoine permission to practice their trades free of guild restrictions.<sup>1042</sup> This meant that freedom was essentially a quality or condition independent of the issue of sovereignty. The sovereign could grant liberty, but this did not mean that the people needed to govern.

Counter to but contemporary with this legal paradigm, another paradigm grew up much more in tune with that later espoused by Arendt. This was a paradigm that hinged on the question of virtue, not on rights and law. Humanists, like John Harrington who argued against Hobbes’ theorization of sovereignty, based their notion of liberty and freedom upon the assumption that man was an essentially political creature.<sup>1043</sup> God had infused humans with the capacity, if not the duty even, for self-governance. Since “virtue” among many things, was understood in this period to mean a kind of inherent quality (like heat to a flame), one might say that in this paradigm that man’s capacity for self-governance, for liberty, was a *virtue* of humankind. Thus, this virtue could be cultivated, for instance, and martialed for the common good. Citizenship in this model was thereby cast as part of a *vita activa* (viz. Arendt), one worked on one’s self virtuously towards a *bien publique*. Governance — and the liberty to govern — was something inherent in human nature, granted not by right, but by God. If one were granted this virtue, and the *polis*, or city were to be governed in a participatory manner by the people, then it necessarily needed to be done so publicly and independent of the furthering of private interests. For the compromising of those interests threatened to corrupt virtue and bend the public good into self-interest. In this model, equality and liberty are moral, not legal imperatives and man’s *personality* rather than his legal status serves as a bellwether for freedom and political participation.

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<sup>1040</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 48.

<sup>1041</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>1042</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1043</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

This debate over the nature of what constitutes liberty, so Pocock, was among the most central to early modern political thought. In the “long” eighteenth century, as a new ruling class began to establish itself (a “monied” elite) of “stockholders and officeholders, whose relations with government were those of mutual dependence,” one observes a concomitant rise of interest in the *vita activa* model as a paradigm for citizenship.<sup>1044</sup> For how else was virtue to be preserved against corruption? Legal status no longer defined who one was, as much as a shifting set of relationships based on a new, expanding commercial landscape of opportunity. The virtuous citizen had to be reconfigured in this new landscape as one who was no longer a Greek ideal citizen, but a participant in a new constellation of transactional relationships and commodities. In this changed world, which was as complex as a rococo commode’s material structure, personality needed to become newly adaptable, as a response to an endless variety of new possible situations that demanded “virtuous” social negotiation. Faced with a context where one’s engagement in the legal paradigm of ruling-and-being-ruled diversified and attenuated, one was encouraged to develop one’s personality through successfully carried out trans/interactions as a mode of active political participation. Manners were a means of handling the unfolding situation, replacing “virtues” with a social psychology predicated upon refining passions and impulses into something akin to a moral and social *smoothing* factor. Edmond Burke wrote that in this regard, “manners are of more importance than laws.”<sup>1045</sup>

Tact, as a social virtue, was important in negotiating this situation. Manners, indeed, depended on tact as, in the words of Lajer-Burcharth, an “adaptive aesthetic conduct.”<sup>1046</sup> Being tactful meant anticipating what others might think; it implied inserting one’s self into another’s skin and inhabiting the thoughts of one’s interlocutor, or as the Chevalier de Méré wrote, “it requires that we penetrate people’s unspoken thoughts and, very often, their most closely guarded secrets.”<sup>1047</sup> The tactful political subject is one whose social liberty depends on being supple and flexible, a chameleon, or harlequin of sorts, like table topped with *Brèche d’Alep*, which accommodates any variety of differences under a chromatically and materially adaptive surface. The tables of the era facilitated this experience and also translated it into a new material paradigm. They multiplied surfaces and materials, but smoothed over rough edges and potentially jarring intersections, offering a display of coordinated difference as a means for cultivating “personality” through the appreciation of the variety and inherent “virtues” of a vast array of commodities. These *commodités*, in turn, incorporated an even more vast array of materials from around the world. The tactility of objects encouraged and cultivated tact and tactility as a social paradigm (a tactic) for self-governance in lieu of disputing legally granted rights and privileges.

A portrait of Monsieur de Buchelay, Fermier Général, by Louis Carrogis from 1758 exemplifies the congruence between this type of furniture and the cultivation of a new sense of self as an interiorized, complex personality built from a world of commercial things. (Fig. 6 The subject sits on a mobile chair (a *bergère*) designed for comfort, as Buchelay’s posture makes clear: legs spread, one arm draped over the chair’s back; a decidedly modern pose. The sitter’s eyes gaze off to the side, drawing the viewer’s attention to a nautilus shell of the type familiar from countless early modern curiosity cabinets. The shell is perched together with corals and other curious things on top of two books, which in turn are placed on top of a light and elegant,

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<sup>1044</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>1045</sup> Cited in Ibid, 49.

<sup>1046</sup> Lajer-Burcharth, 14.

<sup>1047</sup> Ibid.



mobile writing table (“*chiffonier*”). The little table has a drawer, which is closed, like the books on top of it. This closure renders the table ensemble a close analogy to the seated figure, whose “self” and thought remained enclosed in his pensive gaze. The table agglomeration, moreover, also resembles him physically: the nautilus is like Buchelay’s profile, the *chiffonier*’s bowed legs are like his elegantly curved calves.

Buchelay’s person is intended to register as being as multi-faceted as the objects he has placed on his table, purchasable goods that appear to have washed up onto his table, like the *rocaille* objects Boucher splashed onto the cover of Gersaint’s auction catalogue for the auction of the curiosity collector Bonnier de la Mosson’s sale in 1737. (Fig. 7) *Persona* is acquired on the market, but without effort;<sup>1048</sup> Boucher’s catalogue frontispiece is, like Buchelay’s table arrangement, a sort of feigned postdiluvian deposit. Buchelay is a man of taste and knowledge, but also of tact. For he has assimilated difference smoothly into his very being, along the lines modeled by his furniture and belongings, which accrue in a manner *designed* to expand the facets of a virtuous personality. Boucher’s own inventory contains numerous of these kinds of multi-faceted objects, which artfully combine as many disparate elements as possible, like “*une table à pieds de biche, trois portes ouvrantes sur le devant, à desseins Chinois découpé; don’t partie à jour en bois de mérisier, avec son dessus de marbre breche d’Alep.*”<sup>1049</sup> These types of tables aim to both cultivate and portray a personality that is complex, knowledgeable, tasteful, discerning, and made up of various bits and pieces combined seamlessly. Crucially, this is a personality that is in multiple senses *available*: Boucher’s belongings were sold in an auction at the Louvre by Pierre Rémy in 1757, and the frontispiece to the sale by Augustin de Saint-Aubin (after Gabriel de Saint-Aubin) shows a group of potential purchasers, who are also connoisseurs, admiring the complexities of the painter’s mineral and shell collection in his sixteen glass-topped tables of different sizes. (Fig. 8) The buyers/admirers both find and create themselves not only through objects, but also *in* the objects that proffer a landscape of (natural) commodities as part of a sophisticated and highly artficed display. Writing tables from the period can, unsurprisingly, easily be confused the “*coiffeuse*,” or toilette table where one put on a face.<sup>1050</sup>

The rococo rhetoric of fluidity (commercial, social, personal) belies the fact that at the very same moment, European political philosophers and politicians were increasingly preoccupied with defining borders in new, more precise linear forms. In a memoire of 1745, the Chevalier de Bonneval advised to “purge the kingdom of foreign enclaves” and to “close the state as far as the nature of the districts permits.”<sup>1051</sup> The idea was to create a unified economic space that would avoid conflict (“so as to destroy all objects of dispute among frontier inhabitants”) in a permanent manner “most evident for the respective subjects.”<sup>1052</sup> This definition of geographic space straddled civic, or anthropological, and legal models of conceptualizing the state. Where were boundaries in nature? If rivers constituted boundaries between countries that ought to be clear, where exactly was the division? Was it in the middle, or at the river bank? Which bank? Who controlled a river’s mouth? Ought such decisions to be

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<sup>1048</sup> Daniela Bleichmar, “Learning to Look: Visual Expertise across Art and Science in Eighteenth-Century France in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* Vol. 46 No. 1 (Fall 2012), 85-111. 94.

<sup>1049</sup> Pierre Rémy, *Catalogue raisonné des tableaux, dessains, estampes, bronzes, de feu M. Boucher... (Éd. 1771)* (Paris: Hachette/BnF, 2012), 143-144.

<sup>1050</sup> Verlet (1967), 191. On “the promiscuous self” and Boucher, see Lajer-Burcharth, 46-72.

<sup>1051</sup> Sahlins, “Natural Frontiers Revisited: France’s Boundaries since the Seventeenth Century,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol 95, No. 5 (Dec. 1990), 1438.

<sup>1052</sup> *Ibid*, 1438–40.

made based on history (who was there first) or physical geography? Jurists from Puffendorf to de Vattel debated these issues, seeking to establish the kind of clarity.<sup>1053</sup> By 1775 in France, the ministry of foreign affairs had taken over jurisdiction of boundary issues from the war ministry, sending out specially created topographical squads to demarcate what were now referred to as “limits” instead of “frontiers.” During the 1770s and 1780s, at least two dozen treaties were signed affirming the legitimacy of these newly drawn lines, in the hopes not only of resolving border disputes, but also — in doing so — of spurring economic growth in the country’s interior thanks to the establishment of a more unified customs system.<sup>1054</sup>

Legal limits and the rhetoric of tact and manners deployed by furniture both worked to displace conflict in different, but not entirely in opposing manners. Both aimed at establishing zones in which the human animal was framed as commercial, rather than political. Or, to use the Arendtian language of virtue, in which the *vita activa* defined itself in the realm of accumulation, rather than action. As Arendt wrote, and as we observed at the outset of “On the Table,” “(s)ince the decay of their once great and glorious public realm, the French have become masters in the art of being happy among ‘small things,’ within the space of their own four walls, between chest and bed, table and chair, dog and cat and flowerpot, extending to these things a care and tenderness which, in a world where rapid industrialization constantly kills off the things of yesterday to produce today’s objects, may even appear to be the world’s last, purely humane corner.”<sup>1055</sup> Arendt was not writing about the first half of the eighteenth century, but her description is apt when it comes to the rhetorical and material construction of the type of tables that developed in that era. What was an exceedingly public object became an increasingly private one, aligned with the construction of a private self that extended its personality (and cultural capital) through a projection into others, a potentially hostile commercial merger masked by charm. This does not mean that eighteenth-century tables are “worse” than earlier tables, but it does offer an intriguing means of unraveling their continuing and intricate political dimension(s).

Today, tablets, smart phones, and laptops have in many respects taken up the gauntlet from these eighteenth-century progenitors of global personality and boundless self-expression. These devices are also shiny and they too tend to have softly sloped, curved edges, so that they slide in and out of pockets and palms with no friction. Stroking them, one is given to believe that one has opened up the world with a touch. Sliding, and swiping allows one to “unlock,” however, not so much the world, but a self that is projected into a world of easily accessible and acquirable possibilities — for people with a credit card. It is through these devices that “personalities” now create themselves, on webpages (no longer *chiffonnières*) that accumulate aggregate deposits of data which present an image of the self to others that is simultaneously publicly accessible, but reclusive and private in what it actually reveals. Participation in the public realm, through these tables, is easily and incessantly absorbed into the realm of commerce and, as critical theorists would say, market-driven “pseudo-individuality.” And while we appreciate the convenience and comfort our new tables supply, we indeed tend not to know about where they came from, who made them, and under what conditions we operate with them. Nor

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<sup>1053</sup> See Daniel Nordman, *l’Idée de Frontière fluviale en France au XVIIIe siècle: discours géographique et souveraineté de l’État in Frontière et contacts de civilisation: colloque universitaire franco-suisse, Besaonçin, Neuchâtel, octobre 1977* ( Neuchâtel: La Baconnière, 1979), 75-93.

<sup>1054</sup> Sahlins, 1438–40. *ibid.* On the project to unify French space in terms of a shared and standardized set of customs and tax regulations, see J.F. Boshier, *The Single Duty Project: a Study of the Movement for a French Customs Union in the Eighteenth Century* (London: University of London Athlone Press, 1964). book.

<sup>1055</sup> Arendt, 52-53.

do we know who we reach out and touch with them, if anyone at all. When these objects address us, do they administer *to* our needs, or do they, in fact, administer our needs?

It cannot be the case that these tables lack materiality: they are fabricated and distributed. Nor do they fail to map social relations: the data they supply creates a vast web of social networks. So we cannot definitively say that they dematerialize the political body. Indeed, they can be adopted for both progressive and regressive political purposes and they have proven to foment political movements and realities far more vast than a table at Versailles, or in Derbyshire ever could. Yet their flat surfaces are decidedly missing one thing. They do not have legs. Our legs have become the legs of these tables, which we carry with us. We thus do not share their tops with other people, because the devices rest on our own laps instead of a conjunction of diverse limbs. Perhaps we connect with other limbs *through* our surface tops, but these limbs are not necessarily *present* in a way that makes certain that we can hear or see the potentially fraught discourse of our interlocutors. Thus, as Arendt would encourage us to inquire, without ensured guarantees for an equal distribution of equally empowered legs, how will the table continue to stand?

In his castle at Ambras in the mountains of Tyrol, the Habsburg Archduke Ferdinand assembled one of the greatest early modern curiosity collections of his time. The collection included, among other wonders, two extraordinary pieces of furniture.<sup>1056</sup> One is now known as the *Fangstuhl*, or “trap chair.” When guests sat in it, a latch was triggered that chained them into the object making it impossible for them to get up. The only escape route, once captured, was to drink all of the alcohol the hosts poured down your throat as part of raucous banqueting antics. Once drunk, but liberated from the treacherous Bacchic *Stuhl*, Ferdinand’s guests could proceed into his fabled gardens. There, in a tiny pavilion stood a table attached to an underground mechanism powered by water that caused the table to spin as if on its own. How, they must have asked themselves while stumbling around, did the whirling table manage to miraculously remain upright? Giddy from drink, the delighted guests must have wondered wherefrom this truly curious object derived its dizzying power.

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<sup>1056</sup> Wolfram Koeppel, “Marvels, Wonders, and their Offspring” in *Making Marvels: Science and Splendor at the Courts of Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 22-23.

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