Title
Preaching for the Eyes: Priests, Actors, and Ceremonial Splendor in Early Modern France

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Preaching for the Eyes: Priests, Actors, and Ceremonial Splendor in Early Modern France

By

Joy Kathleen Palacios

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Performance Studies in the Graduate Division of the University of California, Berkeley

Committee in Charge:

Professor Shannon Steen, Chair
Professor Shannon Jackson
Professor Nicholas Paige
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Abstract

Preaching for the Eyes: Priests, Actors, and Ceremonial Splendor in Early Modern France

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In 1656, Jean-Jacques Olier, founder of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, urged his students and readers to think of the ceremonies of the mass as “preaching for the eyes.” His emphasis on the liturgy as something that should be not just heard but also seen signaled a shift in Catholic worship away from the auditory toward the visual, as well as a call for priests to acquire what we would now call performance skills so as to “preach” with their bodies. This dissertation argues that ecclesiastical action against actors flared in France between the 1660s and 1730s because the foundation of seminaries two decades earlier had turned parish priests into liturgical performers as part of a larger effort to professionalize the secular clergy. This professionalization helps solve a puzzle presented by the cultural history of the theater in early modern France. Although virulent, religiously informed anti-theatrical discourses punctuated France’s golden age of theater, France’s parish priests appear to have applied anti-actor policies inconsistently. A third of French bishops declared actors “public sinners” during the second half of the seventeenth century, thereby requiring clergymen to exclude performers of all kinds (bateleurs, baladins, farceurs, comédiens) from the sacraments, an exclusion that diminished a person’s civil identity, social standing, and legal rights. And yet in most cases parish priests administered the sacraments as soon as an actor renounced the stage even if the renunciation was thereafter reversed. Sacramental reabsorption rather than exclusion was therefore the norm. Why this game? By analyzing the interactions between priests and actors in the parish of Saint-Sulpice, where a seminary, a fair ground, and the Comédie-Française existed side by side, I propose that France’s secular clergymen expressed their stance against the theater ceremonially instead of textually. The logic of their ceremonial negotiations has nonetheless remained inscrutable to historians without an excavation of priestly performance practices. Seminary documents – liturgical handbooks, seminary rules, ecclesiastical conferences, instructional pamphlets, parish records, and seminary correspondence – make such an excavation possible. Based on twelve months of archival research at the Archives de la Compagnie des prêtres de Saint-Sulpice, the Archives nationales de France, and the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, among others, I show how parish priests in France used ceremonial splendor, or éclat, to differentiate masses from plays, to assert their local authority when actors encroached on parish turf, to distinguish priestly self-presentation from role playing, and to influence ecclesiastical authorities who had the power to issue edicts against actors. Ceremonial splendor enabled a nuanced – although ultimately failed – response to the theater, a response that incorporated theatrical elements while rejecting the theater’s way of organizing bodies and objects in space and time.
For my father,
who bravely fused church and theater
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List of Abbreviations

Archives nationales de France = AN
Bibliothèque nationale de France = BN
Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève = BSG
Archives des prêtres de la Compagnie de Saint-Sulpice = SS
Many hands carried me as I wrote this dissertation. It gives me great happiness to thank those who helped me weather the journey and prosper along the sometimes difficult path. First and foremost, I thank my committee for their guidance. Shannon Steen and Nicholas Paige accompanied me through each juncture of my development from graduate student to scholar. They believed in my work’s potential, acknowledged each forward stride, and came to my aid in times of trouble. In her capacity as dissertation chair, Shannon read countless drafts as I searched for my central claims, patiently highlighted places in the writing where I was starting to find my way, gently indicated ideas that did not quite make sense yet, and offered possible solutions. Her suggestions improved both the scholarship and the artistry of my work. Nick’s generous skepticism and talent for identifying a still-emerging chapter’s core arguments enabled me to clarify my claims while simultaneously filling me with the courage to do so. Michael Wintroub and Shannon Jackson helped me see the dissertation as a whole. Their comments improved its overall coherence, pointed toward the work’s future direction, brought my disciplinary contribution into focus, and helped me better understand what kind of scholar I have become. As my project evolved, so did the committee, such that not all of my teachers have their names officially on the final document despite the crucial role they played in its development. Déborah Blocker was a guiding presence through the early and middle stages of this project. She introduced me to archival research, gave me my first tour of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and arranged for me to meet her colleagues from the Groupe de Recherches Interdisciplinaires sur l’Histoire du Littéraire at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), as well as Pierre-Antoine Fabre, director of the Centre d’Anthropologie Religieuse Européenne (CARE) at the EHESS. Her erudition and passion for documentary accuracy set a standard toward which I will strive throughout my career. Mark Griffith chaired my oral exams and provided a much-needed sounding board at decision points along the path. Finally, Pierre-Antoine Fabre, who took me under his wing from the moment I described my nascent dissertation to him in the spring of 2008, shepherded my development as a historian of religion. He read nearly every early draft and met with me for hours to give detailed feedback, his seminar at the CARE had a profound influence on my thinking, his introduction gave me entry the Archives de la Compagnie des prêtres de Saint-Sulpice, and his encouragement helped me keep going. My gratitude toward each of these directors, teachers, and guides far exceeds my ability to thank them. Their input has strengthened this work more than they even know. The errors and infelicities that remain are my own.

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inquiry and gave me two friends and interlocutors I greatly appreciate, Jeffrey Doty and Ray Ball. Thanks to a year-long research FLAS awarded for the academic year 2009-2010, I was able to devote a year to archival work in Paris. This was absolutely essential to the project’s completion. I feel particular gratitude toward Fathers Jean Longère and Irénée Noye, the archivist and his now-retired predecessor at the Archives de la Compagnie de Saint-Sulpice in Paris, as well as toward the librarian who administered the reading room and print collection during my research, Marie Odile Appavou. Fathers Longère and Noye gave me unfettered access to Saint-Sulpice’s archival documents, granted me permission to consult every manuscript I requested, and allowed me to photograph everything I touched. I am deeply thankful for their generosity. Marie Odile pointed me to numerous sources, both primary and secondary, that I would not have otherwise found and that shaped my work in important ways. In addition, her warmth and friendliness made my long days at the archive all the more enjoyable. Once I returned to the United States, the marvelous collection at the University of California libraries enabled me to continue the work. I thank the state’s tax payers and the university’s donors for making this incredible library possible. During the final year of writing I lived in Nashville, Tennessee. I thank Vanderbilt University’s librarians for going out of their way to ensure I had the library privileges I needed and for filling my interlibrary loan requests with incredible speed. Google Books, too, put an awe-inspiring number of rare print sources at my fingertips. I extend my thanks to each of these institutions and people who facilitated my dissertation research.

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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Preaching for the Eyes

Once the lesson is over, the memory of it gets lost in simple minds, but Ceremonies last as long as the service and hold the people in reverence: They are preaching for the eyes, like speech is an exhortation for the ear, and they are all the more effective when they are more perceptible…¹

This dissertation undertakes a historical anthropology of priestcraft in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, paying special attention to the way changes in both clerical training and Catholic worship affected stage performers. It considers the relationship between the liturgical transformations set in motion by the Catholic Counter-Reformation and a rise in anti-actor actions and attitudes among French clergymen during the early modern period. The term “liturgy,” as liturgical scholar Gregory Dix explains, “covers generally all that worship which is officially organised by the church, and which is open to and offered by, or in the name of, all who are members of the church,” with particular reference to the Eucharist, or mass.²

The preface to a treatise on the ceremonies of the mass published in 1656 by Jean-Jacques Olier, founder of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice in Paris, captures in a memorable phrase the liturgical transformations that informed clerical attitudes toward actors. As the above epigraph shows, Olier urged his students and readers to think of the ceremonies of the mass as “preaching for the eyes.” His emphasis on the liturgy as something that should be not just heard but also seen signaled a shift in Catholic worship away from the auditory toward the visual, as well as a call for priests to acquire what we would now call performance skills so as to “preach” with their bodies. The analogy Olier drew between ceremonies and preaching had repercussions for the Catholic Church’s attitude toward the theater. When Olier aligned ceremonies with preaching, he in effect situated liturgical action as a direct competitor to plays. During the Middle Ages the ceremonies of the mass had not lent themselves to theater comparisons because they had unfolded in an enclosed area called a chancel accessible only to priests and separated from the laity by a wall or screen called a jubé, hence the notion that worshippers would hear rather than see a mass. Preaching, by contrast, took place in the part of the church where the laity gathered, called the nave. Preaching could even take place outside the church in the open air during missions. Thus, lay people in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries heard the mass but saw preachers. In the seventeenth century, however, French churches gradually opened their chancels and placed ceremonies on display. By comparing ceremonies to preaching at a time when fewer physical barriers visually partitioned the nave from the chancel, Olier metaphorically collapsed the distance that separated the pulpit from the altar. His metaphor brought ceremonies into the space of representation.

¹ Jean-Jacques Olier, Explication des cérémonies de la grande messe de paroisse, selon l’usage romain. Par un Prestre du Clergé (Paris: Jacques Langlois, 1656), 7: (“L’instruction passée, le souvenir s’en perd dans les esprits grossiers, mais les Ceremonies durent autant que le service, & tiennent les peuples dâs la reverence: Ce sont des predications par les yeux, comme la parole est une exhortation par l’oreille: & elles sont d’autant plus efficaces, qu’elle sont plus sensibles…”). The title could be translated as “An Explanation of the Ceremonies of the Great Parish Mass.” All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

Prior to the 1640s, when seminary training began to hasten liturgical reform in France, a
priest in a pulpit provoked theatrical anxiety but a priest at the altar did not. Early modern jokes
and anecdotes regularly compared prédicateurs – preachers – to actors and theatrical
entertainments. Pierre de l’Estoile, for example, an acute observer of sixteenth-century affairs,
gauged the size of crowds drawn by actors by comparing them to the crowds drawn by
preachers. In his journal for the year 1577, l’Estoile records that

Sunday, May 19 the Italian actors named li Gelosi began to play their comedies in the
hall at the hotel de Bourbon in Paris. They took as pay four sous per head from all the
French who wanted to see them play, where there was such contest and crowds of people
that the four best preachers in Paris wouldn’t have the same crowd altogether when they
preached.\(^3\)

L’Estoile’s use of the preacher-actor comparison implied – in addition to its practical function as
a means of measurement – that preachers offered a spectacle, a spectacle easily overshadowed by
comic acting. By the seventeenth century, the preacher-actor binary evolved into a mainstay of
antitheatrical discourses. As Sylviane Léoni has noted, “The anti-theatrical quarrel has
sometimes been presented as a confrontation between ‘professionals of the spoken word,’ in
other words between actors and preachers,” adding that “numerous adversaries of spectacles
opposed … in their writings the ruses and lies of the histrion to the sincerity of the sacred
orator.”\(^4\) Churchmen used the preacher-actor comparison not only to vilify actors but also to
denigrate bad preachers. Seminary director Charles-Louis de Lantages, for example, asserted in
his Ecclesiastical Instructions, “Is it not utterly evident that in comparison to these true
preachers, a preacher without zeal does not merit the name, and that he is like an actor who
imitates a great prince on stage even though he is in fact nothing but a man of the lowest
condition?”\(^5\) After the 1640s, poor ceremonial performance, just like bad preaching, could
appear empty to worshippers, like a lowly man’s imitation of a great prince.

Indeed, during the years in which Olier began teaching his seminarians about the
importance of conducting the ceremonies of the mass in a way that would preach to the eyes, the
priests in his parish began to alienate actors from the sacramental scene by refusing to administer

\(^3\) Qtd. in Alphonse-Honoré Taillandier, “Notice sur les Confrères de la Passion, d’après les registres manuscrits du
parlement de Paris (I), et d’autres documents également inédits ou peu connus,” Revue Rétrospective 12 (1834): 17:
(“Le dimanche 19 may les comédiens italiens surnommés li Gelosi, commencèrent à jouer leurs comédies en la salle
de l’hôtel de Bourbon à Paris. Ils prenoient de sa laire quatre sols par teste de tous les François qui les vouloient
aller voir jouer, où il y avoit tel concours et affluence de peuple, que les quatre meilleurs prédicateurs de Paris n’en
avoient point ensemble autant quand ils preschoient”). Emphasis mine. The quote in question can also be found in
an 1824 edition of Etoile’s journal available through Google Books. See Pierre de l’Estoile, Mémoires pour servir à
l’histoire de France, et journal de Henri III et de Henri IV, édition publiée d’après les manuscrits autographes de la
bibliothèque du Roi, vol. 1 (Paris: Foucault, 1826), 151. The version of the quote in the 1824 is slightly abbreviated,
but still retains the comparison between the theater crowd and the crowd drawn by four preachers.

\(^4\) Sylviane Léoni, Le Poisson et le remède: Théâtre, morale et rhétorique en France et en Italie, 1694-1758 (Oxford:
Voltaire Foundation, 1998), 80: (“La querelle anti-théâtrale a quelquefois été présentée comme un affrontement
entre ‘professionnels de la parole’, à savoir entre comédiens et prédicateurs. De nombreux adversaires des spectacles
opposent, en effet, dans leurs écrits, les ruses et les mensonges de l’histrion à la sincérité de l’orateur sacré”).

\(^5\) Charles-Louis de Lantages, Oeuvres complètes de M. de Lantages, prêtre de la Société de Saint-Sulpice, supérieur
Migne (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1857), 710: (“N’est-il pas très-evident qu’en comparaison de ces véritables prédicateurs,
un prédicateur sans zèle n’en mérite pas le nom, et qu’il est comme un comédien qui contrefait un grand prince sur
son théâtre, n’étant en effet qu’un homme de la plus basse condition?”).
sacraments to stage-players. Olier gave a series of conferences on the celebration of the mass between 1642 and 1651, and the first recorded refusal of sacraments to an actor occurred in his parish in 1647. After this initial instance of sacramental refusal in the parish of Saint-Sulpice, bishops in France and its colonies who had ties to Paris’ seminary milieu began to classify actors as *pécheurs publics*, or public sinners, a status that inscribed their sacramental exclusion into church policy. Once defined as public sinners, actors could not receive the Eucharist, serve as a godparent, marry, or obtain burial in Christian ground. In a culture where sacramental participation granted social recognition, the status of public sinner imposed a sort of civic death. Was it more than a historical coincidence that priests who conceived of liturgical ceremonies as an embodied mode of preaching would become enemies of the theater?

I argue that ecclesiastical action against actors flared in France between the 1660s and 1730s because the foundation of seminaries two decades earlier had turned parish priests into liturgical performers. As parish priests gained ceremonial skills, as church buildings evolved so as to place these skills on display, as religious tensions made threats to priestly authority and the mass’ authenticity more dangerous to the Catholic Church’s dominance, and as worshippers learned to critique liturgical performances, priests went on the defensive against a range of people and practices whose activities challenged the type of social bond forged through the sacraments. Actors, stage-playing, and theatergoing were not the only people and practices to come under fire. In fact, many priests, even if they embraced Saint Augustine’s conviction that the theater corrupted those who performed in and watched it, did not bother hassling actors. For one thing, few parishes could boast a theater in the seventeenth century. Other people and practices – banking, prostitution, drunkenness, magic, and witchcraft, for example – received more ecclesiastical attention because they occurred everywhere. This makes the classification of actors as public sinners all the more significant. Given the relatively small number of actors who lived and worked in France as compared to the number of prostitutes or pub owners, the fact that priests worried about them reveals the tensions clergymen faced in constructing their own professional identities. Priests who wanted to “preach to the eyes” through their ceremonial gestures both admired and feared actors. On the one hand, actors provided a model for ceremonial preparation and good liturgical performance. On the other hand, actors established a connection with their audiences that differed from the communion created through sacraments. Whereas sacramental bonds reinscribed early modern France’s hierarchical relations, theatrical identification did not.

To understand why some priests began to classify actors as public sinners during the second half of the seventeenth century, I reconstruct the way seminaries taught ceremonies to clergymen, the way clergymen conducted ceremonies during the mass, and the way these ceremonies generated performative evidence for God’s divine presence in the Eucharist. I excavate the relations between priests and actors in a specific parish – the parish of Saint-Sulpice – and show how priests used ceremonies to get the upper hand in social and political situations in which actors actually enjoyed considerable advantages. I analyze the meaning of the category “public sinner” by deconstructing the methods of self-presentation that enabled parish priests to

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fashion themselves as “public persons.” And I show how seminaries helped originate and spread the idea that acting constituted a “public sin.” More was at stake in these affairs than the sacramental participation of a few actors or the religious conservatism of a subset of priests. These problems matter because the way the priests who trained in France’s early seminaries treated actors subsequently influenced the Catholic Church’s stance toward the performing arts not only in France but also in places as far away as Canada, the United States, and Latin America. Even more broadly, the issues seventeenth-century priests encountered as they struggled to negotiate the fine line between worship and entertainment continue to inflect the performance aspects of religious practice and identity in the Christian tradition.

The research I offer here on the ceremonial training and practices of France’s parish priests makes a contribution to existing scholarship on the Church and the theater in early modern France by introducing questions pertaining to religious practice into a body of knowledge that has thus far largely left the matter of lived religion unexamined. Scholars from two fields, French studies and theater studies, have addressed the relationship between the Church and the theater under the Ancien Régime.7 This work has taken either a literary approach or what could be called an institutional or cultural history approach to the questions raised by ecclesiastical prejudice against actors. Both the literary and institutional or cultural history approaches are essential, and yet neither framework has produced research that looks closely at how conflicts between the Catholic Church and the theater unfolded between specific priests and actors in the parishes where these conflicts occurred. The literary approach focuses on arguments made for and against the theater in pamphlets, treatises, prefaces to plays, letters, dramatic texts, sermons, and other discursive forms, tracing the development of ideas about the theater and connecting these ideas to larger transformations in theological and philosophical thought as well as to generic conventions, reading habits, rhetoric, salon culture, and the arts.8 The institutional approach focuses on the cultural history of the theater as a business, the daily lives of actors, the development of the theatrical profession, the religious conflicts that fractured the Catholic Church between the onset of the Protestant Reformation and the French Revolution, and the types of legal codes and canonical laws that magistrates and clergymen used against actors.9 Concerned either with literary content on the one hand or tectonic shifts on the other, the daily doings of France’s parish priests – who may or may not have read the tracts and treatises analyzed by the literary approach or felt empowered to intervene in the doctrinal disputes

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examined by the institutional approach – and the reasons that motivated them to take action against actors have remained difficult for these approaches to discern. I do not claim to have solved the puzzle, but scholarship on the relationship between the Church and the theater will therefore benefit from an approach that prioritizes ceremonies. All parishes priests engaged in ceremonies, ceremonial concerns shaped their aspirations and their anxieties, ceremonies mediated their responses to wayward parishioners, and those priests who did read theological tracts or intervene in doctrinal disputes eventually had to translate their intellectual positions into ceremonial actions.

This dissertation adopts a performance framework to study ceremonies. A performance framework looks at texts and documents with an eye toward behavior, asking questions like: What were people doing with their bodies, and why? Who was looking? What could they see? What were they meant to see? How did these interactions convey, create, or destroy each person’s power, authority, complicity, or alienation in relation to the other people in the interaction? As performance studies scholar Richard Schechner explains “there is no historically or culturally fixable limit to what is or is not performance” but “[t]he underlying notion is that any action that is framed, presented, highlighted, or displayed is a performance.”

The importance of framing and display for marking a behavior as performance means that a performance approach also pays special attention to the material conditions that facilitate and highlight presentational and representational practices. What kinds of buildings developed to support different practices, what kinds of objects did a practice deploy, how did a practice make use of space and time? Scholars working from literary and institutional perspectives have already asked many of these questions when analyzing texts and documents pertaining to the early modern theater, so a performance framework is not entirely new to the field. They have not, however, asked such questions when examining sources that concern the Church.

My primary objective has been to show how seminaries and the priests who founded, directed, and attended them crafted religious spectacles that hinged on techniques shared by the theater – like rehearsal, role-play, codified gestures, and costumes – while managing by and large to protect these religious spectacles from charges of theatricality. The term “theatricality,” as Thomas Postlewait and Tracy Davis make clear in their introduction to an edited volume bearing that title, has many contradictory meanings. Although the priests in this study did not use the word “theatricality,” its negative connotations encompass the qualities they associated with the theater. For them the theater denoted a mode of representation at once excessive, empty, misdirected, and wrongfully productive; excessive because it appealed to the senses and excited the passions, empty because the people who performed in plays depicted people and places other than themselves, misdirected because spectators pined for onstage heroes the way they should pine for God, and wrongfully productive because the theatrical event and the passions it aroused fostered behavior and feelings that priests considered sinful. If liturgical reform went too far such that the spectacular qualities of religious activities evoked explicit comparisons to the theater, if worshippers associated ceremonies with “role-playing, illusion, false appearance, masquerade, façade, and impersonation” or decried masses as “illusory, deceptive, exaggerated, artificial, or affected,” the Church’s efforts to reinforce its authority by preaching to the eyes would go to

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naught. In light of the high stakes, priests resorted to disciplinary policies against the theater and its performers less often than one would expect. Catholics in France did not close down the theater the way Protestants did in England. Rather, priests mostly policed the fine line between worship and entertainment through ceremonies. They battled theatrical performance with liturgical performance. The classification of actors as public sinners is one trace left by this battle.

Ecclesiastical documents that classified actors as public sinners have typically been analyzed with little reference to the liturgical transformations they aimed to enact. When repositioned in their larger context, these documents that refer in passing to actors tell a story interesting in its own right, a story less about the actors themselves than about practices that sustained both religious authority and religious belief. Given that the ceremonies I study in this dissertation have survived, in one form or another, into the twenty-first century, an attempt to write about early modern liturgical transformations means venturing into territory that some hold sacred and that others view with suspicion. As historian Leor Halevi explains so well in the introduction to his book on medieval Islamic funerals, when examining the past life of ritual practices that still have a bearing on present-day religious expression, the scholar’s “humanistic, historical labor risks being misinterpreted in the current political climate as a polemical or an apologetic work.” What he says of his work is true of mine as well: “It is neither.” I analyze and interpret ceremonial practices and priestly behavior using performance theory tools. In doing so, I acknowledge the creative energy, the art, involved in liturgical activity in much the way a generous theater critic analyses a play or a literary critic interprets a great work.

In the same way that analyzing a play or interpreting a literary text presupposes some kind of relationship to the object of study, the analysis of dusty liturgical sources and ecclesiastical texts from the seventeenth century arguably requires a degree of religious imagination while simultaneously demanding a certain intellectual distance. My interest in the tension between worship and entertainment thus merits an explanation. Until I was sixteen, my father was the pastor of a small Presbyterian church in a low-income neighborhood in Spokane, Washington. Every summer, he wrote a series of plays featuring superheroes like Batman and Robin or Luke Skywalker and Han Solo for the Vacation Bible School and we went door to door inviting kids to come see how faith helped these greats defeat their foes. In the plays, the bad guys always converted to Christianity and reformed their evil ways. The children loved these plays. They came en masse and we sat on the edge of our pews to see Spiderman jump from the balcony or Wonder Woman run up the aisle. Church members, however, raised their eyebrows. The plays were too “secular.” They troubled the boundary between worship and entertainment. Why, I wondered? The church used theatrical representations often – sketches during the children’s sermon every Sunday, plays on mission trips, a praise band led weekly worship – and the pastor’s work involved at times a kind of acting. What made these plays offensive, aside from the superheroes? When I reached graduate school I realized that the controversy stirred up by my father’s plays had deep roots stretching back to the Protestant Reformation, if not further. I set out to understand the liturgical roots of this conflict.

For early modern Catholic France – where plays and masses co-existed – liturgy meant ceremonies. Before beginning my dissertation research, I knew almost nothing about Catholic

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12 I take these definitions of theatricality from Postlewait and Davis, “Theatricality: An Introduction,” 4.
ceremonies. My research took me to Paris, where I spent twelve months consulting and photographing documents from France’s early seminaries. I conducted this research primarily at four sites, the private archives of the Compagnie des prêtres de Saint-Sulpice, the Archives nationales de France, and at the Bibliothèque nationale de France at both its Richelieu (manuscripts) and Mitterand (rare books) locations. I also consulted documents at the Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris, the Bibliothèque Mazarine, the Archives historique du diocèse de Paris, and the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal. The source I gathered fall into seven categories. 1) Personal papers like spiritual journals and correspondence written by seminary founders and directors, 2) life writing, or *vita*, about seminary directors and founders by their successors, 3) administrative documents, both prescriptive and descriptive in nature, that record how seminary directors thought a seminary should be run as well as, in some cases, the kinds of things that actually happened, 4) pedagogical documents like seminary textbooks, liturgical handbooks, lectures, and pamphlets, 5) parish documents that indicated how to conduct ceremonies in a particular church, regulated the distribution of sacramental responsibilities, and recorded information about sacraments that were actually performed, 6) documents that served a publicity function by providing information to parishioners about what kinds of sermons and religious services each church in the city offered on which days, and 7) ecclesiastical documents issued by priests and prelates who had authority over the seminaries, like Episcopal edicts or the decrees of the Council of Trent. Although my personal background helped me imagine how these various texts might have shaped ceremonial behavior, I came to these sources with an outsider’s curiosity. What I found surprised me. I expected to find arguments against the theater or statements about how ceremonies that preached to the eyes enhanced faith. Instead I found, among other things, a preoccupation with making sure that ceremonies bedazzled worshippers and generated splendor, long descriptions of ceremonial gestures filled with royal imagery, rules for how to dress, eat, walk, and talk as a priest, and extensive advice about how to become a *bon curé* and *parfait ecclésiastique*, or “good parish priest” and “perfect churchman.” In other words, I found performance advice for early modern clergymen.

The story of how parish priests used their new-found ceremonial skills to express their animosity toward actors sits at the intersection of three larger, better-known stories, the story of the Catholic Counter-Reformation’s reception in France, of the theater’s rise as a culturally acclaimed form, and of the French monarchy’s transition from ceremonies of state conducted in public spaces to a theatricalized ceremonialization of the king’s daily life at Versailles. I turn now to the task of situating my argument at the nexus of these historical currents.

**Ceremonies, Theater Metaphors, and Religious Reform**

What are ceremonies? For seventeenth-century Catholics, action rather than doctrine occupied the central axis defining “Religion” and its associated concepts. The term “ceremonies” denoted repeated gestures like bowing and kneeling, actions that constituted the smallest but most essential building blocks out of which “religion” was made. Antoine Furetière’s *Dictionnaire universel* defined “Religion” as “Cult of the true God, exterior ceremonies by means of which one testifies that one adores [God] with all his heart.”14 Given the centrality of ceremonies to the concept of religion for early modern Catholics, an array of other terms that

post-Enlightenment, post-French Revolution readers might no longer recognize as ceremonial in connotation would have been impossible to think, speak, or write without designating ceremonies. Terms for worship, like *culte*, designated the ensemble of orthodox bodily practices directed toward God. “Sacrament” referred to ceremonial actions by means of which God did something for, or extended grace to, humans. “Sacrifice” evoked actions done by humans for God. “Service” and “duty” in the context of religion expressed the idea that humans had an obligation to render ceremonies unto God. Even words that encompassed a strong spiritual or emotional aspect like adoration, surrender, supplication, veneration, and respect all retained a profoundly physical, ceremonial meaning. Religion and ceremonies were synonymous to such a degree that men and women who sought to talk and write about the work done by the mind, will, soul, spirit, or imagination during worship used the qualifier “interior” to designate such activities, differentiating *exercises intérieurs*, or “inner exercises,” from the *exercises extérieurs*, or “outer exercises,” that formed the substance of religious action. Seminaries did not dismiss religion’s interior dimension. To the contrary, the seminary milieu developed from and fostered a kind of interiority vibrant enough that future generations dubbed it “The French School of Spirituality.” Nonetheless, religion remained first and foremost a phenomenon carried out through the body in and for a public.

In the wake of the Protestant Reformation and Wars of Religion that shook Christendom in the sixteenth century, ceremonies took on renewed importance. In response to Protestant critiques of the Catholic faith, Catholics sought with renewed vigor to express and promote their central doctrines through ceremonies. In particular, Protestants rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation, the Catholic belief that during the mass “the Eucharistic bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ and are bread and wine no longer.” In rejecting the doctrine of transubstantiation, Protestants ignited a conflict about worship as well as a conflict about theology. Johannes H. Emminghaus writes, “Calvin’s and Zwingli’s denial of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and their evaluation of offices and sacraments were ultimately frontal attacks on the traditional style of liturgical celebration as such.” Dix describes these attacks as the “puzzling violence of the Reformers against the Mass.” These attacks demanded not only a theological response, but also a liturgical one. Alongside the spiritual sustenance that devout Catholics drew from liturgical ceremonies, ceremonial reform therefore also constituted a non-discursive polemical medium.

However, before the 1640s no formal system of training or education existed in France for the type of priests responsible for conducting ceremonies at the parish level. These priests were called *prêtres séculiers*, or “secular priests,” as opposed to the *prêtres réguliers*, or “regular priests,” who occupied the other main category into which the Catholic Church divides its clergy. Ecclesiastical minds understood secular priests as not-regular, so it is best to understand regular priests first. Regular priests had a reputation for doing ceremonies well. Olier

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18 Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 629.
compared them to the earthly equivalent of angels dedicated to rendering homage to God.\textsuperscript{19} Their ceremonial abilities, though, did little to help the Catholic Church’s authority in relation to parishioners since regular priests conducted their ceremonies in the hidden confines of the cloister. Regular priests belonged to religious orders – like the Jesuits, the Franciscans, or the Capuchins, to name just three well known orders – or lived in monasteries. In principle if not always in practice, a regular priest did not therefore live “in” the world. Even if a physical cloister did not separate a regular priest – also sometimes called a monk or a religious, depending on his order – from the world, a regular priest’s comportment distinguished him. Upon joining an order, regular clergy swore solemn vows, or promises to God, after which they were perpetually bound to live by the “rule” (\textit{règle}), or code of life, shared by all the members of their order and intended to aid the quest for personal and spiritual perfection. The term “regular” derived from the fact these priests followed a rule. Although regular priests did not necessarily live in monasteries, these solemn vows set them apart from secular life.\textsuperscript{20} Furetière states, “‘Regular’ is said most particularly of those who have sworn vows in a Religious House. It is opposed to Secular Clergyman... When one speaks of the Regulars, one means all the Body of Monks.”\textsuperscript{21} Likewise, according to Furetière, if a regular left his monastery people said he “lived secularly in the world.”\textsuperscript{22} The process of joining a religious order, of leaving the world, endowed regular priests with ceremonial skills because they had to pass through a probationary period called a novitiate during which they learned what would be required of them as members of the order.\textsuperscript{23} Ceremonially skilled, regular priests nonetheless turned their liturgical practices inward toward God and the religious order to which they belonged.

Secular priests bore the Catholic Church’s outward-turned ceremonial burden. Although some regular priests interacted frequently with laypeople, became bishops, or served as parish priests, the great majority of parish priests and local clergymen belonged to the secular clergy. They cultivated the religious ideas and habits of lay French Catholics, who relied on them for baptisms, marriages, weekly masses, and the required doctrinal classes known as catechism. Secular priests could own property, just like a layperson and, although a secular priest owed obedience to his bishop, he was not obliged by any vow to renounce his own will. In this sense, secular priests lived in the world rather than behind a cloister.\textsuperscript{24} Yet, the secular clergy lacked ceremonial skills because the requirements for becoming a secular clergyman were minimal. No probationary period or institutionalized novitiate taught them how to fulfill their basic

\textsuperscript{19} According to Olier, “The Religious in the Church are on earth in regards to Our Lord what the Angels are in regards to God in Heaven”. See Jean-Jacques Olier, \textit{Traité des saints ordres; par Monsieur Olier, prestre, ancien curé de la paroisse de S. Sulpice du Faux-bourg S. Germain à Paris, instituteur, fondateur & premier supérieur du seminaire de S. Sulpice} (Paris: Chez Jacques Langlois, Imprimeur ord. du Roy, au MOnt Sainte Geneviesve, devant la Fontaine: En sa Boutique dans la grande salle du Palais, vis à vis la grande Chambre, à la Reyne de Paix; et Emmanuel Langlois, ruë saint Jacques, à la Reyne du Clergé, 1676), 451: (“Les Religieux dans l’Eglise sont sur la terre à l’égard de Nostre Seigneur, ce que les Anges sont à l’égard de DIEU dans le Ciel”).


\textsuperscript{21} See “Regulier” in Furetière, \textit{Dictionnaire universel}: (“Regulier, se dit plus particulierement de ceux qui ont fait des voeux dans une Maison Religieuse. Il est opposé à Ecclesiastique Seculier... Quand on parle des Reguliers, on entend tout le Corps des Moines”).

\textsuperscript{22} See “Seculier” in Furetière, \textit{Dictionnaire universel}: (“Ce Religieux a quitté son Monastere, & vit seculierement dans le monde”).


\textsuperscript{24} Vermeersch, “Religious Life.”
sacramental obligations. The most prohibitive condition, imposed by the Edict of Blois during the previous century (1561), required that a man entering the secular priesthood demonstrate that he had property worth a minimum sum, usually 100 livres; an amount roughly equivalent to a laborer’s earnings.  

After meeting this requirement, men aiming for the priesthood, if we take the diocese of Paris as a model, had to present testimony to the bishop or his auxiliaries from the priest of his home parish certifying his moral uprightness. To attain the preliminary stage of ordination, they also had to take a short test to ensure that they knew some Latin. Although an additional test preceded each successive ordination on the way toward the priesthood – a process that entailed seven stages – and each test required progressively greater doctrinal knowledge, the unqualified and ill-prepared could easily pass these tests, which were rudimentary and did little to prevent cheating. Even in larger cities like Paris, where many men entering the priesthood had earned university degrees and therefore had a higher level of education, a more refined Latin and perhaps a theological background, they received no training specifically related to the ceremonial duties they would assume as secular clergymen.

Consequently, before the middle of the seventeenth century liturgical practices in France varied greatly from diocese to diocese. Catholic counter-reformers considered this a problem. Vincent de Paul lamented in 1659, “Oh, if you had seen the diversity in the ceremonies of the mass 40 years ago!... It seems to me that there was nothing uglier in the world than the diverse ways it was celebrated...” The Council of Trent (1545-1563), the Catholic Church’s official response to the Protestant reformation, had taken a number of steps to address variations in the mass, chief among them the decision to issue a standardized missal, the book containing all that is said, read, or sung during the Eucharistic rite throughout the church year. After a commission of cardinals completed this task, Pope Pius V published the new Roman Missal in 1570, along with a Bull making the revisions mandatory unless a local version of the mass had been in use for more than 200 years. However, the French king and Parliaments, or high courts – worried that Trent’s decrees would increase the Pope’s authority within France’s borders – refused to ever officially accept the Council of Trent, which prevented it from having the force of law in France.

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27 Ferté, La Vie religieuse dans les campagnes parisiennes, 146.

28 Cited by Taveneaux, Le Catholicisme Dans La France Classique, 2:137: (“Ah, si vous aviez vu la diversité des cérémonies de la messe il y a quarante ans! ... Il me semble qu’il n’y avait rien de plus laid au monde que les diverses manières dont on la célébrait...”).


France. The Assembly of French Clergy did not formally embrace the Council’s decisions until 1615. This considerably slowed any homogenizing effect of Pope Pius V’s missal. Even where French bishops chose of their own volition to adopt the Roman Missal as the official text for their dioceses, this did not mean that local parish priests began using it. In the words of historian Robin Briggs, once ordained, “Most clerics learned their trade – for this was how they and their parishioners commonly saw it – through apprenticeship to an existing priest, very often a relative.” But older parish priests frequently insisted on remaining faithful to local usages, however non-standard, insufficiently ancient, or idiosyncratic they might appear to outsiders. In 1605-1606 the Assembly of Clergy decided, wanting to foster liturgical unity, to distribute copies of the Roman Missal to parishes that did not have one. Especially in poor or remote parishes where the parish priest could barely read, this was, in historian René Taveneaux’s opinion, likely to have done little more than create confusion. Although the liturgical books published in greater and greater numbers constituted a critical mechanism for defining liturgical norms, at the beginning of the seventeenth century the Catholic Church in France had as yet no mechanism for directly influencing liturgical practice. When evaluated according to Trent’s criteria, France’s secular clergymen performed ceremonies poorly and the French Church had a performance problem.

Seminaries:

Seminaries provided the French Church’s primary vehicle for shaping the secular clergy’s liturgical performances. In their mature form, France’s seminaries were educational institutions in which priests trained aspiring priests while living together in community. They offered vocational training in a format that blended elements from a range of ecclesiastical and secular domains, including the collèges, universities, monasteries, court society, and the theater. The result produced an environment that functioned like a liturgical laboratory in which priests and priests-in-training learned and practiced the interlocking activities that forged ecclesiastical identity and the ceremonial building blocks essential to an early modern understanding of religion. After almost a century of fits and starts, a flurry of seminaries sprung up in the early 1640s once this practice-oriented model for seminary training took hold. According to Joseph Bergin’s count, the country welcomed thirty-six new seminary foundations between 1642 and 1660, fifty-six between 1660 and 1682, and twenty-five between 1683 and 1720. He notes that “only six of the smallest southern dioceses never had a seminary of their own.” Paris alone boasted eleven seminaries by 1715. Four of the seminaries founded in Paris in the early 1640s exerted a particularly strong influence over the shape of clerical formation and liturgical training in France for the next 150 years. They are the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice (1642), founded by

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38 Bergin, *Church, Society and Religious Change in France, 1580-1730*, 200.
Olier and run by the priestly society he instituted for this purpose; the Seminary of Saint-Lazare (1642), founded by Vincent de Paul and run by his Congregation of the Mission; the Seminary of Saint-Magloire (1642), founded by the Bishop of Paris and entrusted to the French Oratory; and the Seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet (1644), founded by Adrien Bourdoise and run by the community of priests out of which the seminary grew. This dissertation will focus especially on the seminaries of Saint-Sulpice and Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet because they pioneered hands-on pastoral and liturgical training for priests, because a substantial collection of primary documents remains from these two seminaries, and because they both interacted extensively with either theater-based pedagogical techniques or theater performers who lived in the parishes to which the seminaries were attached.

Like the upsurge in liturgical books, the seminaries received their initial impetus from the Council of Trent, which passed a decree in 1563 in the 18th article of its 23rd session, in other words toward the end of its long tenure, called Cum adolescentium aetas. It obliged bishops to found a seminary near their cathedral to educate and train young clerics from their diocese for the priesthood. The bishop was supposed to fully fund his seminary, building new buildings if necessary, paying instructors, and financing poor students, to whom they were to give preference. The seminaries envisioned by the decree strongly resembled the collèges, or grammar schools, that had begun to spring up all over Europe under the management of religious orders like the Jesuits. Students would start at age twelve, the decree suggested, complete coursework in grammar and other liberal arts, and then receive specific training for the priesthood, attending mass every day all the way through. In the words of Antoine Degert, author of the most comprehensive history of French seminaries covering the years between the Council of Trent and the French Revolution, Cum adolescentium aetas “set in place the principles and sketched the plans” that would guide all future seminary efforts.

It proved difficult, however, to found seminaries in precise accordance with the Council of Trent’s specifications. Even bishops who wanted to comply with the council’s decree had a terrible time figuring out how to finance such a large and expensive undertaking. They also needed capable instructors, which were difficult to find in some dioceses, especially in those without a large university. As a result, seminaries started sporadically and assumed a range of configurations into the early seventeenth-century – some bishops tried a seasonal format, some entrusted their seminaries to religious orders, some attempted to found seminaries like those outlined by the decree but ran out of funds – but none of these experiments evolved into a lasting institution. The fact that in France the Council of Trent did not have the force of law opened a very wide margin for experimentation. Through trial and error, the seminaries that met with success did so by moving away from a grammar school model and admitting seminarians at a...
much older age, typically between 20 and 30.\textsuperscript{46} They also tended to develop at some remove from the bishop’s supervision, even if they espoused a high theological view of his authority. As Vincent de Paul said of the obligation to report directly to the bishop, “[A]lthough the thing seems reasonable … Oh, that this has unfortunate results.”\textsuperscript{47} Finally, the model for seminary education that proved successful shifted the emphasis from, in Vincent de Paul’s words, the ecclesiastical “sciences” to “the usage of these.”\textsuperscript{48} In performance terms, French seminaries shifted their emphasis from theory to practice.

Seminary founders did not necessarily consider liturgical training their primary purpose. Seminaries aimed at a more comprehensive reform encompassing basic education and morals in addition to a priest’s ability to administer the sacraments. Derived from the Latin word for a seed bed, the term “seminary” implied a kind of education that not only transferred knowledge but also imparted a way of being and a style of embodiment, what Pierre Bourdieu calls a habitus.\textsuperscript{49} Olier defined a seminary as “a place destined for giving the seeds and the first fruits of the ecclesiastical spirit to all the subjects of the clergy.”\textsuperscript{50} Nonetheless, learning to properly conduct liturgical ceremonies constituted a central part of seminary curriculum. In the preface to a handbook written during the second half of the seventeenth century by an instructor from one of Paris’ other seminaries, its author described seminaries as places “where a great many capable men labor with incredible care to form workers worthy to serve at the Altar.”\textsuperscript{51} At the time, this was a revolutionary idea. Vincent de Paul identified Adrien Bourdoise (1584-1655), the founder of the Seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet, as “the first who God had inspired to make a

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\item \textsuperscript{47} Cited by Broutin, \textit{La Réforme pastorale en France au XVIIe siècle}, 2:227: (“quoique la chose semble raisonable … Oh, que cela a de fâcheuses suites”).
\item \textsuperscript{48} Cited by Broutin, \textit{La Réforme pastorale en France au XVIIe siècle}, 2:228: (“et non pour les apprendre les sciences mais l’usage d’icelles”).
\item \textsuperscript{50} Jean-Jacques Olier, “Projet de l’establissement d’un séminaire dans un diocèse, où il est traité premièrement de l’estat & de la disposition des sujets, secondemmente de l’esprit de tous leurs exercices, par un prestre du clergé,” Printed document with handwritten notes and rough draft manuscript by Olier (Paris: Chez Jacques Langlois, Imprimeur & Libraire ordinaire du Roy, vis à vis la Fontaine Ste Geneviesve, 1651), 5, Ms. 20, SS: (“Le Seminaire est un lieu destiné pour y donner les semences, & les premices de l’Esprit Ecclesiastique à tous les sujets d’un Clergé”).
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seminary for teaching the administration of the sacraments and all the rubrics.” Degert notes that Bourdoise placed so much emphasis on learning liturgical ceremonies and rubrics that contemporaries often concluded his seminary’s primary objective was to train priests to celebrate the mass. “Before him,” continued Vincent de Paul, addressing priests at his own seminary, “we hardly knew what it was [to administer the sacraments], there was not any particular establishment where one taught them. A man, after his theology, after his studies, after a bit of Latin, went off to his parish and administered the sacraments in his own fashion.” As Bergin observes, Vincent de Paul, “was as well placed as anyone” to evaluate the early seminaries. By the end of the seventeenth century, seminaries had standardized ceremonial practices and priestly self-presentation among the secular clergy. Seminaries, in effect, used performance to professionalize secular priests. Seminary directors insisted on the parish priest’s identity as a personne publique, or public person, on the necessity of having a sense of vocation in order to enter the priesthood, and on the outer markings that distinguished “perfect churchman” from an imposter.

Theater:

The ceremonial transformations that enabled secular priests to professionalize aggravated the relationship between the church and the theater for reasons that concerned the social, religious, and political context. Socially, secular priests were not the only tradesmen intent on enhancing their status and reputation whose labor involved self-presentation, spectacle, and the display of skills in front of large groups gathered during non-work hours. Actors, too, were professionalizing in the mid-seventeenth century. In fact, priestly professionalization and the theater’s institutionalization progressed in tandem. During the same ten-year period in which France’s early seminaries acquired Episcopal and royal approval and began reforming ceremonial practices in the parishes to which the seminaries were attached, France’s acting troupes transitioned from nomadic representations to permanent residency. As W. L. Wiley explains, “During the fifteenth century and on into the sixteenth there were no public theatres or troupes of professional actors in France, in the sense that there would be in the seventeenth century.” Troupes of traveling entertainers with six to ten actors and a poète à gages toured the country, renewing the contracts that bound them together every Easter, performing in adapted urban spaces, and announcing their upcoming plays in the street. Paris had had one fixed

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52 Cited by Antoine Degert, Histoire des séminaires français jusqu’à la révolution, vol. 2 (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1912), 128: (Défunt le bon M. Bourdoise ... a été le premier à qui Dieu a inspiré de faire un séminaire pour y apprendre l’administration des sacrements et toutes les rubriques”).
54 Vincent de Paul, Avis et conférences spirituelles de saint Vincent de Paul aux membres de la Congrégation (Pillet et Dumoulin, 1881), 493: (“Avant lui, on ne savait guère ce que c’était, il n’y avait pas d’établissement particulier où on les enseignât. Un homme, après sa théologie, après ses études, après un peu de latin, s’en allait dans une cure, y administrait les sacrements à sa mode”); cited by Degert, Histoire des séminaires français, 2:128. Degert, whose history of France’s first seminaries remains the most comprehensive work on the subject, reaffirms Vincent de Paul’s evaluation. Degert writes, “It was the great originality and the chief merit of Bourdoise to awaken in the clergy the knowledge and practice of the liturgy” (“Ce fut la grande originalité et le premier mérite de Bourdoise de réveiller dans le clergé la connaissance et la pratique de la liturgie,” 127).
55 Bergin, “From Dioceses to Parishes: The Geography of the French Church,” 197.
theater hall since 1548: the Hôtel de Bourgogne, built by the Confraternity of the Passion for the production of their mystery plays. After the Confraternity stopped producing its own plays at the end of the sixteenth century, they rented out their theater and also enjoyed a monopoly over plays performed elsewhere in Paris, extracting a fee from troupes who performed on makeshift stages.

However, after 1628 the troupe known as the comédiens du roi occupied the Hôtel de Bourgogne, and in 1629 an ambulatory troupe led by Charles Le Noir and Guillaume des Gilberts, known as Montdory, returned to Paris after touring the countryside, but this time with a new play by a still-unknown playwright named Pierre Corneille. This troupe, whose success rivaled that of the troupe in residence at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, decided to stay permanently in Paris. In 1634, they signed a five-year lease in a part of Paris called the Marais for a jeu de paume, or tennis court, which they remodeled into a theater. Paris afterward had two permanent theater troupes, each with their own hall. In 1641, as if to concretely mark the theater’s importance as a permanent fixture of urban life, Louis XIII’s chief minister, the Cardinal Richelieu, opened a theater hall in his Palace near the Louvre. As the seminaries opened their doors, Paris’ new theaters were opening their doors too. Actors were no longer itinerant. Legitimized by contractual ties to urban buildings, the performers at the Hôtel de Bourgogne and Théâtre du Marais began to insist on the difference between their productions and those of the still-ambulatory farce players, Marionette players, and acrobats who performed in Paris’ seasonal fairs. In the same way that seminary-trained secular clergymen sought to distinguish themselves from the modes of clerical behavior that had predominated in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, by mid-century France’s professional troupes reserved the term comédien for themselves, designating their fairground competitors as farceurs, bateleurs, and baladins.

Changes in dramatic conventions, acting methods, and the social composition of audiences aided France’s actors in improving their reputation and social standing. In the 1620s, farce and sottises had already started to give way to neoclassical tragedies, comedies, and tragicomedies. At approximately the same time that Vincent de Paul and his fellow reform-minded priests began to feel distaste for ceremonies conducted in an idiosyncratic fashion, actors and theater audiences were likewise demanding stricter standards for the plays they watched. In the mid-1630s, actors, playwrights, and their patrons began to debate dramatic conventions in terms that to the secular clergy must have sounded odd given that dramaturges who favored theunities of time, place, and action condoned by Aristotle and Horace were known as the

59 Wiley, “The Hotel de Bourgogne,” 3–4; Regarding the Confraternity’s enforcement of its monopoly, see Deierkauf-Holsboer, Le Théâtre de l’Hôtel de Bourgogne, 38–55.
62 Viala, Le Théâtre en France des origins à nos jours, 159–160.
63 On the entertainments offered at the seasonal fairs, see Maurice Albert, Les Théâtres de la Foire (1660-1789), 2nd ed. (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1969).
Réguliers, whereas those who favored more supple conventions were called the Irréguliers.\footnote{Viala, Le Théâtre en France des origines à nos jours, 181–182.} During the same period, secular clergymen like Bourdoise who were in the process of founding seminaries embraced the idea that secular priests should follow a rule, which made them more like prêtres réguliers.\footnote{One of the first things Bourdoise did when he decided to become a priest was convince several ecclesiastical friends to form a small community with him and live by a rule. See Philibert Descourbeaux, La vie de monsieur Bourdoise, premier prestre de la Communauté de S. Nicolas du Chardonnet (Paris: Chez Francois Fournier, rue S. Jacques, aux Armes de la Ville, 1714), 61–63; P. Schoenher, Histoire du Séminaire de Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet, 1612-1908, d’après des documents inédits, vol. 1, Quelques Pages de L’histoire Religieuse du Diocèse de Paris (Paris: Société Saint Augustin, 1909), 27–28.} Whether these two notions of régulier and rules overlapped remains an open question, but the professionalization of both priests and actors hinged on regularity.

Meanwhile, liturgical and theatrical regularity entailed inverse relationships between the representational spaces in which masses and plays were conducted and the elites who attended them. Liturgical reform imposed a new distance between worshippers and the rites they attended, while theatrical regularity welcomed elite spectators on the stage. This difference increased the theater’s status as a competitor to religious services by making masses less useful to the nobility for their own self-presentation during the second half of the seventeenth century while making plays more useful. Elites had always attended mass, both because the Church required weekly attendance and because local Lords could distinguish themselves in front of their communities by affixing their arms to the parts of the church building they had helped pay for or by obtaining seats of honor in the area near the altar, called the chancel.\footnote{John Lough, Paris Theatre Audiences in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 4; Barbara G. Mittman, Spectators on the Paris Stage in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984).} Liturgical regularity, however, prompted secular priests to chase even the most aristocratic worshippers from the chancel, a space the seminary-trained secular clergy adamantly reserved for themselves. For example, when the Cardinal Richelieu’s niece, the Duchess of Aiguillon, attended mass at the Church of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet and Bourdoise saw that her attendants had seated her in the chancel, he picked up her carré, or cushion for kneeling, and moved it to the nave, thereby ejecting her from space he considered ecclesiastical and relegating her to lay space even though she was a friend and patron of the seminary.\footnote{Mittman, Spectators on the Paris Stage in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, 3–4.} Liturgical regularity restricted opportunities for elites to display their rank. The theater, on the other hand, created more and more space for onstage spectators as the seventeenth century progressed. In the 1620s and 1630s, attending the theater had become increasingly acceptable for elites.\footnote{Mittman, Spectators on the Paris Stage in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, 3–4.} By the late 1630s, when titled gentleman began to occupy the onstage nooks and crannies where lackeys had previously gathered to watch plays, “viewing plays from the stage became a status symbol among the nobility.”\footnote{Frédéric Cousinié, Le Saint des saints: maîtres-autels et retables parisiens du XVIIe siècle (Aix-en-Provence, France: Publications de l’Université de Provence, 2006), 97–100.} One hundred years later in 1720, the theater belonging to the Comédie-Française – located in the parish of Saint-Sulpice not far from the church building where Olier had served as curé – could seat 231 people on the stage and as many as 340 total spectators behind the theater curtain when box seats are added to the number.\footnote{Descourbeaux, La vie de monsieur Bourdoise, 498.} The professionalizing actors therefore literally gave the professionalizing secular clergy a run for their money.
Two features of the religious context in France during the second half of the seventeenth century contributed to clerical ambivalence about the theater. The Catholic Church’s decision to embrace the devotional value of images while regulating their use made it impossible to completely prohibit an art form conceived as “paintings that move.” Meanwhile, within the Catholic fold spokespersons for the Church, both clerical and lay, adopted widely divergent positions about the theater’s status, positions that found their expression in an ongoing conflict and competition between Jesuits and Jansenists. Seminaries found themselves caught in between these positions, which made it difficult for secular clergymen to pen texts against the theater but imperative for them to exclude actors from the sacraments.

The Council of Trent, by condoning the use of images and relics in worship, had sanctioned the representational arts. In doing so, the Church also sanctioned many of the elements that comprised theatrical production: human craftsmanship, the human body, the voice, and the interaction between a spectator and that which he or she sees. The decree “On the Invocation, Veneration, and Relics, of Saints, and on Sacred Images,” issued in 1653 under the twenty-fifth and last of the Council’s sessions, commanded priests to “instruct the faithful diligently concerning ... the legitimate use of images,” asserted that “images of Christ, of the Virgin Mother of God, and of the other saints, are to be had and retained particularly in temples, and that due honour and veneration are to be given to them,” and insisted that “the holy bodies of holy martyrs ... are to be venerated” because through them “many benefits are bestowed by God on men.”

Unlike the Protestant reformers, whose logocentric iconoclasm enabled the Puritans to readily dispense with the theater, Catholic counter-reformers could not easily discount the theater without also delegitimizing the various media shared by theatrical representations and liturgical ceremonies. As Marc Fumaroli argues, “The situation of the profane theater in Catholic Europe [was] therefore infinitely more open than in Reformed [Protestant] Europe.”

As with images and relics, though, whose production, style, placement, and use Catholic authorities tried to control, they tried to control the placement of theaters, the timing of their representations, and the theater habits of spectators.

In Italy, the clergy ascribed to the idea that Christianity could moderate and modify the theater. This idea did not, however, win over the clergy in France where, as Fumaroli points out, a significant Calvinist presence inclined the French Church toward a more rigorous stance against the theater. The fact that the king and his ministers patronized and protected the theater in France diminished still further the types of actions the Church could take against the stage and its players. In 1641, for example, Louis XIII had published a declaration that theater historians have largely interpreted as an effort on the part of the monarchy to improve the social and legal standing of actors, who under the legal code that France inherited from Rome were considered infamous, thus as a defense of the theater against those who opposed it on religious and moral

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76 Fumaroli also suggests that the French did not want to imitate the Italians, although this argument seems less strong given that the Catholic counter-reformers in France considered Charles Borromeo, a sixteenth-century bishop of Milan, their model for seminary foundation and parish reform. See Fumaroli, “Sacerdos sive rhetor, orator sive histrio,” 456.
grounds. As Déborah Blocker argues, this declaration in fact constituted “a political intervention aiming undoubtedly less to defend the theater … than to reform it and control it.” Through the decree, titled “Déclaration sur la profession des comédiens, qui leur défend les paroles lascives et déshonnêtes” (Declaration on the profession of actors, which prohibits them from using lascivious and dishonest words), the king arrogated the right to regulate and modify the theater. It declared that

If the aforementioned actors so regulate their stage actions such that they are … exempt of impurities, we want that their exercise – which can innocently divert our people from the many bad occupations – cannot be imputed to them to the detriment (blame) or prejudice of their reputation in public affairs (commerce public).

Once the king had claimed authority over the theater’s regulation, the main tactics that bishops and parish priests thus had at their disposal were ceremonial. Rather than reforming the theater, they used sacramental access and ceremonial action to try to shape the behavior of theatergoers and actors.

The seventeenth century’s conflict and competition between Jesuits and Jansenists also structured the secular clergy’s response to the theater. One question that has long puzzled scholars about anti-theatrical discourses is that the priests who actually pastored churches near theaters or refused sacraments to actors were not the same clergymen who penned pamphlets against the theater. This silence can be explained in part by the fact that seminary-trained secular clergymen occupied a position betwixt and between those of the Jesuits and the Jansenists. The Jesuits, although they did not sanction public theaters, used plays to teach rhetoric in their collèges. A relatively new religious order founded in 1540 with a mission oriented toward teaching, preaching, and evangelization, the theater suited the Jesuit’s humanist orientation and their conviction that the world’s wonders, like knowledge and the arts, could be used to promote the Catholic faith. The Jesuits, who passed through a two year novitiate before joining the order, possessed a high level of liturgical competence. In acknowledgment of their liturgical skill and in order to make up for the secular clergy’s lack of liturgical ability, Popes Paul III, Jules III, Pie IV and Pie V had granted the Jesuits special privileges so that they could, among other

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77 Blocker, *Instituter un “art,”* 282: (“une intervention politique visant sans doute moins à défendre le théâtre … qu’à le réformer et à le contrôler”).

78 André Isambert, Taillandier, and Decrusy, “Déclaration sur la profession des comédiens, qui leur défend les paroles lascives et déshonnêtes,” in *Receuil général des anciennes lois françaises, depuis l’an 420, jusqu’à la Révolution de 1789: Mai 1610-mai 1643*, vol. 16 (Paris: Belin-Leprieur, Libraire-Éditeur; Verdière, Libraire, 1829), 537. According to the editors, the declaration was published on 16 April 1641 and registered by the Parliament of Paris on 24 April 1641: (“En cas que lesdits comédiens réglent tellement les actions du théâtre qu’elles soient, du tout, exemptes d’impuretés, nous voulons que leur exercice qui peut innocemment divertir nos peuples de diverses occupations mauvaises, ne puisse leur être imputé à blâme ni préjudicier à leur réputation dans le commerce public”); For a nuanced discussion of this decree, see chapter four, “Une Institution ambiguë: Le statut des comédiens et la déclaration royale du 16 avril 1641,” in Blocker, *Instituter un “art,”* 279–363.


things, preach and administer the sacraments anywhere without first obtaining permission from the local bishop or parish priest.\(^8\) The secular clergy admired, aspired to, and envied the Jesuits’ liturgical skills and social status. After 1640, once seminaries started to equip the secular clergy to reclaim sacramental responsibilities from the Jesuits, their hostility toward the Jesuits grew.\(^8\)

And yet, an ecclesiastical class that wanted to emulate and surpass the Jesuits could not very well openly attack a medium, the theater, with which the Jesuits were closely associated. At the end of the seventeenth century when a high-ranking secular clergyman – Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, the bishop of Meaux – wrote a tract against the theater at least one ecclesiastical onlooker interpreted the theater apology that had precipitated the polemic as a “trap” set for the Archbishop of Paris.\(^8\) This abbot’s interpretation lends credence to the hypothesis that for seminary-trained priests to write against the theater was politically delicate.

In contrast to the Jesuits, the Jansenists – a term that designates a theological current within Catholicism, not a religious order – sought to purify the Catholic faith.\(^8\) Historian Robin Briggs describes the Jansenists as “Catholic Puritans.”\(^8\) Anti-humanist in orientation, the Jansenists wanted to purge Catholic France of its worldly pleasures instead of modifying these pleasures so that they corresponded to Catholic norms. From its beginnings, though, Jansenism expressed itself in two forms, what church historian René Tavenaux calls a “doctrinal form” and an “applied form.”\(^8\) In 1667, a Jansenist and intellectual belonging to the doctrinal strand, Pierre Nicole, composed France’s most virulent anti-theater treatise.\(^8\) On matters of ecclesiastical discipline – meaning things like priestly comportment, parish reform, and enforcement of attendance at weekly masses, as well as a concern for mastering liturgical ceremonies – the seminary founders and their pupils had much in common with the applied form of Jansenism, which was “less interested by the ideas themselves than by their application, spontaneously

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\(^8\) Tavenaux, *Le Catholicisme dans la France classique*, 1:75.

\(^8\) Tavenaux, *Le Catholicisme dans la France classique*, 1:76.

\(^8\) In 1694, the preface to a collection of plays by Edme Boursault caused a stir because it sported as its preface an apology for the theater by, as the preface’s titled claimed, “a theologian illustrious for his quality and merit.” The preface’s author was discovered to be a monk named Father Caffaro. Bossuet wrote his treatise against the theater as a response to Caffaro’s preface. According to the memoir of an abbot named Le Gendre, who was the secretary to the archbishop of Paris at the end of the seventeenth century, Caffaro’s preface would have gone unnoticed if the Jesuits (Le Gendre does not specify who) had not brought it to the archbishop’s attention in order to “take revenge against him [the archbishop] by setting him this trap so that he would be exposed to the satire of the libertines if he condemned the theater or to the reproaches of the devout if he did not condemn it.” While Le Gendre’s account certainly does not tell the whole story, it does imply that the theater question had become a source of political leverage among ecclesiastical parties so that theater discourse was not about the theater. For Le Gendre’s comment, see M. Roux, *Mémoires de l’abbé Le Gendre, chanoine de Notre-Dame, secrétaire de M. de Harlay, Archevêque de Paris, abbé de Clairfontaine, publiés d’après un manuscrit authentique avec des notes historiques, biographiques et autres* (Paris: Charpentier, Libraire-Éditeur, 1863), 189; For Caffaro’s preface and Bossuet’s response, see Jacques Benigne Bossuet, “Maximes et réflexions sur la comédie,” in *L’Eglise et le théâtre: Maximes et réflexions sur la comédie précédés d’une introduction historique et accompagnées de documents contemporains et de notes critiques*, ed. Charles Urbain and Eugene Levesque (Paris: Chez Bernard Grasset, 1930), 169–276.

\(^8\) For a brief introduction to Jansenism, see Tavenaux, *Le Catholicisme Dans La France Classique*, 2:299–327.


turned toward pastoral [care], works, morals, or rules for living.”

In fact, Bourdoise, like many other Catholic counter-reformers, corresponded with Jansenism’s French founder, the abbot of Saint-Cyran, who Tavenaux identifies as the originator of an applied Jansenism. At least one student from the Seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet – a young priest named Lancelot – left Bourdoise’s circle in 1638 to join the Jansenists at their monastery, where he became an influential teacher alongside Nicole. Bourdoise introduced Lancelot to Saint-Cyran himself after a dinner in late December of 1637, on the day of Feast Day of the Holy Innocents.

Although Bourdoise was not a Jansenist, these convergences suggest that he and his seminarians would have embraced Nicole’s view of the theater. Olier, too, had ties to an applied Jansenism. Nicolas Pavillon, the bishop of Alet and a staunch Jansenist, collaborated with Olier in the 1630s in the composition of conference lectures for young men entering the priesthood.

And yet, a theological debate cast a shadow of heterodoxy over Jansenism. Its opponents, many of them Jesuits, accused Jansenists of a closeted Calvinism. Seminary directors at Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet and Saint-Sulpice vigorously defended their reputation against charges that they, like Pavillon, bore a Jansenist imprint. To this day, the priests of the Society of Saint-Sulpice conscientiously clear their founder’s name. The introduction to a recent volume translated by a Sulpician and containing one of Olier’s spiritual texts, for example, is careful to note that “It is a fact that our mystics always opposed the Jansenists.”

Even if seminary-trained secular priests in the seventeenth century agreed with a Jansenist rejection of the theater, to write or publish treatises expressing agreement with Nicole’s position would have put the doctrinal reputation of the seminaries at risk. A ceremonial response to actors, however, could only increase the secular clergy’s status and authority.

One reason that the use of ceremonies rather than print to attack actors allowed the secular clergy to simultaneously publicize their animosity toward the theater while enhancing their status and authority had to do with France’s political context during the second half of the seventeenth century. Louis XIV, who reigned during the years when most of the sacramental refusals on record occurred, made ceremonies central to courtly life. After 1661, when Louis XIV ruled without the aid of a chief minister, he revived and elaborated the courtly ceremonial Henri III had put in place upon the advice of his mother, Catherine de Medici, at the end of the French Wars of Religion (1559-1576). The queen’s advice, notes Frédérique Leferme-Falguières,
Falguière, contained three basic principles for keeping a royal court in order: “live in public, subject oneself to an unfailing regularity, and introduce a necessary distance between oneself and one’s courtiers.” In keeping with Catherine de Medici’s life, Louis XIV organized and conducted every aspect of his schedule in ceremonial fashion. In Leferme-Falguière’s words, “Each moment in the king’s life, each gesture, even the most anodine, was ritualized and became a spectacle. The courtisan’s life thus followed ‘the regulated hours of the king’ which imposed a precise and practically invariable schedule: the waking (le lever), mass, lunch (dîner), the walk, supper, and bedtime (le coucher).” This everyday ceremonial translated the king’s majesty into gestural choreography. Norbert Elias writes, “Glory for the king was what honour was to the nobles… The king’s need to not only exert his power but to demonstrate it constantly through symbolic actions, to see it reflected in triumphs over others, in the subservience of others – precisely this is gloire.” Ceremonial splendor gave embodied testimony to the king’s majesty.

For the secular clergy, this ceremonialization of courtly life was significant for at least two reasons. First, as Leferme-Falguière argues, “Ceremonial greatly overflowed the frame of the court and was deployed in multiple public events in which the role of courtiers was essential.” Consequently, when parish priests expressed their rejection of the theater through their ceremonial treatment of actors, the clergy used their bodies to “speak” a language that French subjects, and especially the elite, knew well. Second, as Elias argues, for the king courtly ceremonial constituted an “instrument of domination.” The king used ceremonies to withhold and distribute favors so as to make and destroy the rank of courtiers who either pleased or angered him. By distributing ceremonial privileges, Louis XIV could mete out the amount of prestige accorded to each person, using etiquette “to determine even in small ways the reputation of people at court.” Thus, when the secular clergy expressed their disapproval of the theater by ceremonially alienating actors, this enhanced their own status by positioning the parish priest as a little king. The act of withholding ceremonies, as occurred when a priest refused to administer a sacrament to an actor, highlighted the secular clergyman’s position at the top of the parish hierarchy. Since regular priests – with the exception of Jesuits – could not administer sacraments in a parish without the curé’s permission, the withholding of sacraments consequently demonstrated the parish priest’s authority over not only the actor but also over other clergymen who might be inclined to administer the sacraments to the stage-player if they had the ability to do so. And of course, by ceremonially excluding actors from the Christian community the secular clergy displayed their authority over Christendom’s internal boundaries.

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96 Leferme-Falguières, Les Courtisans, 227: (“vivre en public, s’astreindre à une régularité sans faille, et introduire la distance nécessaire avec les courtisans”).
97 Leferme-Falguières, Les Courtisans, 231: (“Chaque moment de la vie du roi, chaque geste, même le plus anodine, est rituelisé et devient un spectacle. La vie du courtisan suit ainsi ‘les heures réglées du roi’ qui imposent un emploi du temps précis et quasiment invariable: le lever, la messe, le dîner, la promenade, le souper et le coucher”). In my translation, I have changed Leferme-Falguières statement to the past tense in keeping with English-language norms for historical narrative.
99 Leferme-Falguières, Les Courtisans, 14: (“Le cérémonial déborde très largement du cadre de la cour pour se déployer dans de multiples manifestations publiques dans lesquelles le rôle des courtisans est essentiel”).
101 Elias, The Court Society, 89; My phrasing is also influenced by Elias, La Société de cour, 77.
After Louis XIV’s court settled at the palace of Versailles in 1682, the granting and withholding of sacraments at the parish level also functioned, quite possibly, to counteract the theatricalization of ceremonies occurring at court. Since the early seventeenth century, the great state ceremonies that during the Middle Ages and Renaissance had publically performed the king’s authority had been in decline; namely the sacre or coronation, the lit de justice, the royal entry, and the royal funeral.102 These ceremonies – and in particular the royal entry – not only marked crucial moments in a monarch’s rule, but also “manifested the ties between the king and his subjects” in a liturgically meaningful form.103 According to Lawrence Bryant, in the seventeenth century the royal entry was compared to Christ’s entry into heaven.104 However, whereas France’s previous kings had traveled continuously, visiting their various palaces and conducting royal entries across the kingdom, Louis XIV only performed one royal entry, that of 1660 when he entered Paris with his bride.105 Once Louis XIV established his court’s permanent residence at Versailles, liturgically-inflected activities no longer bound the king to his city in physical, visible ways as the royal entries of the Renaissance had done. Rather than attending mass at the local cathedral or a prominent church, as a Renaissance king would have done with his mobile court, Louis XIV built a chapel in his palace at Versailles, suited to his own ceremonial display before his entourage of courtiers.106 The mass, which Louis and his court attended daily, thus became in the calculus of palace ceremonial just another diversion alongside plays, ballets, and promenades in the court’s cycle of entertainments.107 By withholding sacraments from actors, who were technically members of the king’s household, secular priests could quietly remind the king that the liturgy should join him visibly to his people in public not just privately to God in the king’s royal chapel. In doing so, secular priests used liturgical ceremonies to protest a form of royal ceremonial that cut itself off from the outside world.

The marked theatricalization of courtly ceremonial has influenced the way scholars interpret early modern ceremonies, whether royal or liturgical. The spectacular features of court ceremonial are regularly analyzed as a form of theater, or as theatrical in nature. Pierre Mélèse begins his study of the seventeenth-century theater and its audiences with the assertion that, “The pomp of the century of Louis XIV depends, itself, on the art of mise-en-scène, and the Sun King

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103 Leferme-Falguières, Les Courtisans, 19 (“manifeste les liens entre le roi et ses sujets”). I borrow Leferme-Falguère’s phrase for the ties established between monarch and subjects by royal ceremonies, but the liturgical inflection, which I base on the monographs about each ceremony, is mine.
104 Bryant, The King and the City in the Parisian Royal Entry Ceremony, 64.
106 For a detailed study of the chapel, see Alexandre Maral, La Chapelle royale de Versailles sous Louis XIV: Cérémonial, liturgie et musique (Sprimont, Belgique: Pierre Mardaga Éditeur, 2002).
is the first among all actors, the most frequently in representation.” Jean-Marie Apostolidès, in his work on the theater’s political function under Louis XIV, associates theater with religious ceremony, analyzes religious ceremony as theater, and then locates both the theater and the mass under the category of ritual in order to conclude that they share a parallel political function, that of sacrifice. Leferme-Falguières writes that courtly ceremonial, by ritualizing every aspect of daily life, entangled courtiers in a “permanent theater.” Ralph Giesey, too, turns now and then to the theater metaphor, calling courtly ceremonial a “theater” that “follows the King.” Most recently, Philippe Martin used the theater metaphor to structure his historical overview of the mass, titling his book Le Théâtre divin (The divine theater). Without the theater metaphor, early modern ceremonial escapes us.

This presents a methodological dilemma. On the one hand, the theater metaphor makes ceremonies intelligible to twenty- and twenty-first century readers. On the other hand, the theater metaphor encompasses ideas and assumptions derived from the theater’s modern and post-modern developments. When applied to early modern ceremonies, the metaphor can therefore sometimes obscure rather than illuminate the aspects of ceremonial activity that did not, in fact, operate theatrically. That being said, the theater metaphor certainly has interpretive advantages. It sheds light on the inner workings of royal majesty, in particular by uncovering ceremonial splendor’s nature as a complex game of seeing and being seen and its strange blend of physical proximity and social distance. The part of the theater metaphor that scholars find particularly useful is the distinction between actors and spectators. The underlying idea, not always explicitly stated, is that majestic splendor needed spectators. For example, Lucien Bély conceives of ceremonial as a “political spectacle.” Thus, he finds that courtly life continually invented ceremonies in which “each gesture and decorative detail needed to be seen and understood.”

In analyzing a seventeenth-century source like Le Cérémonial François (French ceremonial) – in which the king’s historiographer, Théodore Godefroy, recorded details about how the

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110 Leferme-Falguières, Les Courtisans, 224: (“théâtre permanent”).

111 Giesey, Cérémonial et puissance souveraine, 69: (“théâtre” qui “se déplace avec [le Roi]”).


114 Lucien Bély, La Société des princes, XVIe-XVIIe siècle (Paris: Librairie Athrême Fayard, 1999), 134: (“spectacle politique,” “chaque geste et chaque détail de la décoration devaient être visible et compris”).

ceremonies of state were conducted under Louis XIII’s predecessors – Bély finds that its content corresponds to “that which a spectator of the Court, or even from the street, can see.” He writes:

These spectators are evoked in these texts, whether as the crowd that presses around the processions or the nobility who pay their respects to strangers at Court, because most often the political ceremony finds its purpose by being public.

Leferme-Falguières adds a layer of nuance to Bély’s theater metaphor by describing courtiers as “simultaneously spectators and actors.” In adopting the distinction between spectators and actors, scholars like Bély and Leferme-Falguières explain an essential feature of majesty. The importance for a king or noble of acting for and having spectators cannot be underestimated. The Cardinal Richelieu writes, in a chapter of his Testament politique in which he reprimands Louis XIII for a court characterized by too little ceremony, “Strangers only conceive of the grandeur of Princes by means of that which shows on the outside” The theater metaphor helps scholars penetrate the mechanisms of this showiness.

The actor-spectator framework often stands in for another important feature of splendor’s production; that of distance mingled with proximity. The higher a person’s rank, the larger the number of ladies or gentlemen in waiting, pages, lackeys, servants, and other individuals he or she had in service. Elias observes, “great lords and ladies needed an army of domestics,” and indicates that by 1744 the palace of Versailles, according to at least one report, had a population of ten thousand people. In the midst of this physical proximity, the king had to “introduce the necessary distance with his courtiers.” Ceremonial activities achieved this goal by visually and mentally marking the distances that “separated … the members of the society from each other.” The metaphor of the theater spectator who passively watches actors on an elevated stage from the cramped pit or box conveys the separation and passivity that these ceremonies presumably imposed on their witnesses in the course of marking social distances.

Bernard Violle’s discussion of the spectacular character of the early modern mass, although he uses a “concert” metaphor rather than a “theater” metaphor, demonstrates how, as an interpretive tool, spectators stand for the way ceremonies pulled people in while also keeping them separate. He remarks that as soon as “sumptuous celebrations” became the norm for French masses,

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116 Bély, La Société des princes, XVIe-XVIIIe siècle, 397: (“ce que peut voir un spectateur de Cour, et même de la rue”).
117 Bély, La Société des princes, XVIe-XVIIIe siècle, 397: (“Ces spectateurs sont évoqués dans ces textes, que ce soit la foule qui se presse au passage des cortèges ou la noblesse qui fait aux étrangers les honneurs de la Cour, car le plus souvent la cérémonie politique trouve sa raison d’être en étant publique”).
118 Leferme-Falguières, Les Courtisans, 224: (“à la fois spectateur[s] et acteur[s]”).
120 Elias, La Société de cour, 22, 66: (“les grands seigneurs et les grandes dames avaient besoin d’une armée de domestiques”); Again, I preferred the French translation. See also Elias, The Court Society, 45, 80.
121 Leferme-Falguières, Les Courtisans, 227: (“introduire la distance nécessaire avec les courtisans”).
122 Elias, La Société de cour, 108: (“séparaient … les membres de la société les uns des autres”). Indeed, Elias jumps directly from his discussion of proximity and distance to parallels between courtly life and classical French theater; See also Elias, The Court Society, 111–112.
123 For a description of the early modern French theater in these terms, see Apostolidès, Le Prince sacrifié, 37–38.
It turns out that the celebration becomes a ceremony, that music and song transform into a concert during the mass, which distracts from the liturgical action instead of being a means to participate.  

The theater metaphor here implies that in a liturgical context ceremonies drew people close, fascinated them, caught their eyes, and made them spectators while excluding them from real participation. Ceremonial splendor, whether at court or in church, transformed those who saw it into a passive audience.

Of course, as Barbara Mittman and Jeffrey Ravel have shown, early modern spectators were neither distant nor passive in relation to onstage action. Mittman, as already discussed, reconstructs their onstage presence. Ravel reveals the early modern theater audience’s capacity to express political messages. Nonetheless, spectators in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries arguably had less freedom of movement than they had had in the sixteenth century when attending mystery plays performed on outdoor stages or confraternity productions put on by amateurs for their boisterous confreres. The actor-spectator metaphor conveys this constraint, and helps explain how courtiers who were on the one hand empowered “actors” orchestrating their own ceremonial display were also always cowed by the simultaneous task of watching the endless ceremonial displays around them.

Despite its rewards, the theater metaphor poses three interpretive problems. The chief disadvantage is that the theater metaphor obscures the aspects of early modern ceremonial – and even of theatrical – practices that people could do, feel, or imagine but not technically see in an objective sense. Given that worshippers in churches, people in crowds, and playgoers with lateral views of the stage could not always see very much or very well, an interpretive frame that encompasses touch and sound in addition to sight would expand our understanding of majesty’s production. Although a theater metaphor has the potential to signal these other sensory registers, it usually does not. Second, because the theater metaphor often comes coupled with assumptions about spectator passivity, it neutralizes the agency of ceremonial and theatrical participants. Third, by sweeping all courtly activities under the sign of theater, scholars blind their analysis to the disparate performance logics that operated in the court’s various pursuits. I am most interested in the logics that organized liturgical and theatrical obligations, but it is quite possible that other regular activities like gambling, masques, and the promenade would also benefit from fewer theatrical metaphors. Seeing and being seen were important to all these activities, but the interplay of sight, sound, and touch, as well as the use of space and time, differed significantly from activity to activity. It would be worthwhile to ascertain these nuanced differences. Finally, the theater metaphor is arguably an important reason that scholars have had difficulty articulating why early modern conflicts between the Church and the theater mattered. If everything was already theatrical, what could possibly be at stake in the performance of plays? What could be dangerous about actors?

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Performatic Formations:

Performance provides a framework through which theater and ceremony can be analyzed without being elided. All interpretive strategies—including the one I am about to propose—have shortcomings, and so the theater metaphor, despite its limitations, will and should remain a fruitful tool for understanding early modern life. Furthermore, the metaphor’s use in relation to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ceremonies should continue to be refined in light of discoveries about the material conditions in which early modern plays were produced so as to avoid anachronism. And yet, for the purpose of analyzing conflicts about the theater, it seems crucial, so as to avoid ending up exactly where we started, to adopt an analytic mode that does not lead inevitably back to the theater. I am going to feel my way, as it were, toward this alternative analytic mode by examining a slice of theater polemic and directing my attention toward the gestures implicated by its rhetoric rather than toward the spectators, actors, or games of display to which it might also refer.

In his treatise against the theater, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, the bishop of Meaux—a frequent preacher at Louis XIV’s court and a former tutor to the Grand Dauphin—cast the dangers of theatrical identification in religious language. He compared the spectator’s interest in onstage characters to worship:

Thus, the poet’s sole intention, the entire aim of his work, is that they [the spectators] are, like his hero, captivated by beautiful people, that they serve them [the characters] like gods; in a word, that they sacrifice everything to [the characters]…

By adopting the worship metaphor, Bossuet advanced the implicit argument that the experience of playgoers in the theater interfered with their religious obligations as les fidèles, or faithful Christians. He does not go so far as to assert that play-watching amounted to idolatry, although many of his fellow churchmen did. As Nicholas Paige argues, “we can say this about most theories of the theater from the 1630s on: theater is a kind of temporary idolatry, in the sense that viewers take the image for its referent. The poet, the actor, the spectator all ‘know’ that the play is not the thing; but contagious passion makes us forget, makes idolaters out of us.”

If Bossuet had intended his reference to worship as more than a metaphor, he would have written a text with sharper legal and canonical teeth than a set of Maximes et réflexions sur la comédie (Maxims and reflections on plays). The stated purpose of Bossuet’s text was instructional rather than doctrinally binding in the way, for example, that an Episcopal edict would have been. He composed the Maximes to counteract a short tract in favor of the theater that had circulated widely among Paris’s educated, play-going public. This theater apology, attributed to a monk named Father Caffaro, “made itself read by its brevity.” In response, Bossuet offered his own readable text as an antidote in the form of “short reflections filled with great religious

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126 This quote comes toward the end of a paragraph in which Bossuet argues that Pierre Corneille wanted the audience of his play Le Cid to fall in love with the heroine, Chimène, right along with the play’s hero, Rodrigue, who is captivated by her. Jacques Benigne Bossuet, “Maximes et réflexions sur la comédie,” in L’Eglise et le théâtre: Maximes et réflexions sur la comédie précédés d’une introduction historique et accompagnées de documents contemporains et de notes critiques, ed. Charles Urbain and Eugene Levesque (Paris: Chez Bernard Grasset, 1930), 177. All translations mine unless otherwise noted.


principles.” As a rhetorical strategy, the worship metaphor enabled Bossuet to align the theater question with the hotly debated theological problems posed by images and icons, while simultaneously appealing to his courtly readers in a language familiar to them from love poetry.

Nonetheless, Bossuet’s worship metaphor merits critical attention as more than a rhetorical embellishment. In a liturgical context, the verbs on which the metaphor hinged – servir (to serve), sacrifier (to sacrifice) – referenced specific bodily practices that constituted a recognizable repertoire of behaviors and gestures associated with attending the mass but also applicable in other domains. These gestures included movements for marking the Christian’s body, like the sign of the cross or the application of holy water, as well as physical actions that transmitted God’s glory through the worshipper’s limbs, like genuflections, inclinations, and prostrations. Serving a divinity required a well-trained body. Bossuet does not think the theater fosters passive spectators. To the contrary, he accuses spectators of misdirecting, metaphorically, their liturgical actions. Theatrical captivation misdirected liturgical action – again, still metaphorically – by introducing movements of its own. “[I]f the author or actor of a tragedy does not know how to move and to transport [the spectator] with the passion that he [the actor or author] wants to express,” Bossuet asks, “where does that leave him, if not in the cold, in the boring, in the ridiculous, according to the rules of the masters of the art?” These theatrically inspired movements of the heart, though, broke out of the bounds of metaphor for Bossuet and interrupted the ceremonial fabric of the sacraments. “Amidst all these commotions in which all the pleasure of plays consists, who can lift his heart to God,” Bossuet presses, “who does not fear, in these foolish joys and foolish sorrows, to extinguish in himself the spirit of prayer, and interrupt this exercise, which, according to the word of Jesus Christ, must be perpetual for a Christian…?”

The Catholic exercise of prayer required, at least intermittently, the same gestures associated with the verbs servir and sacrifier. Bossuet’s own catechism instructed the children in his parish to make the sign of the cross and dab themselves with holy water every morning upon waking and every night before going to bed and taught them a prayer to say each time they sinned. Even though the prayer does not state that it must be finished with a sign of the cross, bodily habit would likely have prompted the faithful to have ended it with a touch to the forehead, heart, and shoulders, just as they did in the morning and at night. Even if Bossuet invoked the notion of idolatry metaphorically, he did not, in the end, conceive of the theater’s interruption of liturgical practice in metaphorical terms. Liturgical ceremonies required continuous application.

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130 Bossuet, “Maximes et réflexions sur la comédie,” 176–177: (“si l’auteur ou l’acteur d’une tragédie ne le sait pas émouvoir, et le transporter de la passion qu’il veut exprimer, où tombe-t-il, si ce n’est dans le froid, dans l’ennuyeux, dans le ridicule, selon les règles des maîtres de l’art?”). Emphasis added.
131 Bossuet, “Maximes et réflexions sur la comédie,” 206: (“Parmi ces commotions où consiste tout le plaisir de la comédie, qui peut élever son cœur à Dieu?” “qui ne craint pas, dans ces folles joies et dans ces folles douleurs, d’étouffer en soi l’esprit de prière, et d’interrompre cet exercice, qui, selon la parole de Jésus-Christ, doit être perpétuel dans un chrétien…?”).
132 The prayer read: “I detest, oh my God, for the love of you the sin I have committed, I ask for your pardon by the Blood of Our Lord, and with the help of your holy grace I will not offend you again” (“Je déteste, ô mon Dieu, pour l’amour de vous le péché que j’ay commis: je vous en demande pardon par le Sang de Nostre Seigneur: & moyennant vostre sainte grace je ne vous offenserai plus.” 53). See Jacques Benigne Bossuet, Catéchisme du diocèse de Meaux (Paris: Chez Sebastien Mabre-Cramoisy, Imprimeur ordinaire du Roy, rue Saint Jacques, aux Cigognes, 1687), 51–54.
The comparison Bossuet drew between the captivated spectator and the devout worshipper therefore pointed to a special zone of friction between the theater and the mass. This zone can best be described as performatic. Diana Taylor invented the term performatic to solve a semantic problem in performance studies. She recognized that she could not, without provoking confusion, use the term performativity to talk about the way that embodied practices create or transfer cultural knowledge and social norms. Although performativity would seem to refer to the various physical qualities or effects of performance, performance theorists adopted the notion of performativity from linguistic philosophers. Consequently, performativity refers instead to the capacity of discursive practices like speech acts or the normative uses of language to produce real effects in the embodied realm, rather than the reverse. Taylor therefore coined the term performatic “to denote the adjectival form of the nondiscursive realm of performance.” Thus, discourses are performative whereas performances are performatic.

I adopt and develop Taylor’s term in order to focus on the embodied practices that expressed clerical attitudes toward actors, and to highlight the capacity of these practices to do things in an Austinian sense. Given that according to J.L. Austin a performative speech act transforms the identity of the speaker by defining or redefining social bonds – his classic example is the statement “I do” in marriage – Taylor’s term makes it possible to argue that a performatic gesture, like performative speech, instantiates or reiterates a social relation. A bow would be the simplest example, instantiating or reiterating a difference in status. It then becomes possible to theorize performatic formations that operate in the realm of gesture according to the principles described by Michel Foucault at the level of discourse, what he calls discursive formations. Foucault’s favorite examples of discursive formations are law and medicine. Discursive formations consist of statements among which one can identify regular patterns of dispersion, for example “an order, correlations, positions and functions, [and] transformations.” The patterns of dispersion that make up a discursive formation give rise to a “field of strategic possibilities.” These strategic possibilities “permit the activation of incompatible themes, or … the establishment of the same theme in different groups of statement[s].” In other words, discursive formations enjoy coherence thanks to the rules that guide not the content of statements but their organization and relation to other statements. At the same time, discursive formations tolerate a high degree of heterogeneity in that they set the parameters for the kinds of statements that can be said and for their possible meanings, rather than dictating which statements will or must be said. A statement made up of the exact same words might therefore appear in more than one discursive formation but with quite different effects, not because the statement’s content has changed but because the logic connecting it to other statements differs from one discursive formation to another. The physical behaviors

137 Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language, 38.
associated with the theater and the mass, even when they share common gestures like the bow, follow distinct patterns of dispersion. They constitute performatic formations.

The more traditional term for what I have called performatic formations is repertoire. I will treat these concepts as interchangeable, but the idea of performatic formations is important because it explains what I think a repertoire is and how I think repertoires function. Taylor, too, uses the term repertoire, and so I continue to build on her work; however, Taylor does not define the nature of a repertoire or discuss how a repertoire operates. Repertoire remains somewhat mystified in her work, and defined largely in opposition to the archive. I use the term repertoires to designate patterned ways of organizing people and objects in space and time. Repertoires offer, like discursive formations, a field of strategic possibilities for action.139

My contention in this dissertation is that ecclesiastical action against actors in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries reveals the seam between increasingly competing repertoires, the theatrical and the liturgical. While theater performance and attendance in the seventeenth century did not yet or not always form a coherent performatic formation, the inner logic organizing theater activity – by which I mean both performing on stage and watching a performance from within an audience – unraveled the ceremonial glue that provided socio-cultural coherence to a society organized around rank. Secular priests, who had both a religious and a professional investment in the liturgical repertoire’s smooth operation, felt particularly threatened by the theater and by those who performed in it. Their own social advancement in relation to the regular clergy on the one hand and their authority over their parishes on the other depended on ceremonies conducted well and without interruption. The verbs that trouble Bossuet revolved around notions of movement. Something about the theater experience moved – rearranged, disaligned, disrupted – the organization of bodies and objects in space and time that was crucial for the production of splendor – or what early moderns called éclat – through ceremony. If the ceremonies of the mass elaborated a performatic formation, theatrical activity – even when embedded within the ceremonial framework at court – very often presented a performatic interruption.

The chapters that follow investigate the liturgical repertoire and its theatrical interruptions by focusing on four aspects of ceremonial splendor’s materiality: visuality, spaces, bodies, and objects. Each of these material categories presented secular clergymen with opportunities for elaborating and extending the liturgical repertoire, while at the same time confronting them with the mass’ performatic vulnerability, the points at which ceremonial splendor could break down if disrupted by alternative modes of spectacle, like the theater.

The first chapter considers ceremonial splendor and uses visuality as a lens to ask to what degree masses were theatrical. After reconstructing the rehearsal practices by means of which seminarians learned to conduct liturgical ceremonies, it argues that during the seventeenth century tensions between masses and plays operated on two levels. When considered in terms of what masses placed on display, their visible content, the kinds of gestures and spaces deployed by masses and plays began to converge after the 1640s. And yet, when considered in terms of the bodily practices that gave sense to what people saw – in other words as repertoires or patterned ways of organizing bodies and objects in space and time – liturgical and theatrical action in fact

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139 Sociologists have been using the notion of repertoire in this way since the 1960s. See Ann Swidler, “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies,” American Sociological Review 51, no. 2 (1986): 273-286. Swidler writes, “A culture is not a unified system that pushes action in a consistent direction. Rather, it is more like a ‘tool kit’ or repertoire (Hannerz, 1969: 186-188) from which actors select differing pieces for constructing lines of action” (277).
began to diverge in the early modern period. The liturgical repertoire’s internal logic sought to extend beyond the mass’s boundary, whereas dramatic representations strove for a concentration of place, time, and action.

The second chapter turns to a case study of sacramental exclusions in the parish of Saint-Sulpice. The parish presents an ideal case study because it housed in close proximity a church, a seminary, a monastery, a seasonal fair where acrobats, tight-robe dancers, and marionette players performed and, in 1673, Molière’s former troupe moved into the neighborhood. This chapter shows how seminary-trained priests used the ceremonies that comprised the last rites – the sacraments received before death – to construct the parish’s urban space in a way that bolstered their clerical authority when confronted with actors who enjoyed the king’s patronage. It argues that the goal of these refusals was not exclusion but rather absorption. By reabsorbing actors into the liturgical community, secular priests highlighted the importance of ceremonies, extended the church’s liturgical space into the surrounding neighborhood, and reasserted a vision of the community as a hierarchically organized body.

The third chapter focuses on bodies in order to ask what it meant to be “public.” The chapter posits that an actor’s status as public sinner reflected, in narrowed and inverted form, the status secular priests were trying to secure for themselves, that of public person. It shows how the professional ideal of ecclesiastical perfection required priests to appear in public to preach and teach, potentially provoking scandal and inadvertently making priests vulnerable to worshipper critiques. The priest’s body could thus potentially plunge him into public sin. Seminaries established priests as public persons, I argue, by leveraging ceremonies and archival writing so that when priests appeared in public their particularity remained subordinated to the signs of their priestly office. Public sinners, by contrast, appeared in public but lacked access to the ceremonial and archival resources necessary for presenting themselves as more than or other than a private person inappropriately exposed.

The fourth and last chapter asks how the idea of listing actors as public sinners spread. The mechanism by which priests designated actors as public sinners is well known. A bishop condemned actors by publishing a *Rituel* – a liturgical book providing sacramental instructions to the priests in his diocese – in which he added terms like *comédiens* or *farceurs* to a list of professions and behaviors classified as “public sinners.” The current paradigm, which figures the *Rituel* as a closed, regulatory text leveraged by ecclesiastical elites, argues that clerical action against actors spread from the top down. This chapter argues that the *Rituel* also functioned as a ceremonial object, molded by local uses. The chapter provides evidence that the idea of listing actors as public sinners in fact arose from ceremonial innovations fostered by seminaries as they taught priests how to use the *Rituel* to administer sacraments at the parish level.
Priests in the seventeenth century described theatrical performance in liturgical terms. Their use of liturgical language evinces a competition between masses and plays. Louis Tronson (1622-1700), the Superior General of the Seminary and Society of Saint-Sulpice from 1676 until his death, possessed a small, handwritten notebook of sermons against entertainments, the contents of which show how preachers in his parish explained the theater’s evils to their parishioners during the second half of the century.\(^1\) The second sermon in the tiny notebook – small enough to carry in a pocket and then hold in the palm of the hand while preaching – repeatedly figures theatrical spectacles as a form of idolatry. Titled “Contre les marionnettes, ou il est parlé en general contre les comedies” (Against marionettes, in which it is spoken in general against plays), the sermon begins by equating the seventeenth century’s entertainments to the Roman spectacles against which Saint Cyprian railed in the third century, and then chastises parishioners for perpetuating them.\(^2\) “[Y]ou have made a game and a pastime out of what was formerly an act of idolatry,” declares the sermon, “and after having renounced idols, you still make exceptions for this extravagant and libertine cult that remains prohibited to you.”\(^3\) The term

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1 “Du Carnaval, contre les desbauches qui s’y passent”, n.d., Ms. 317, SS. The title given to the entire manuscript in the register for the Archives des prêtres de la Compagnie de Saint-Sulpice in Paris is actually the title of the first sermon in the volume. All the sermons in the manuscript address the kind of entertainments characteristic of the Foire Saint-Germain, the seasonal fair located across the street from the Church of Saint-Sulpice. The title page bears the following note indicating that the manuscript had originally belonged to Louis Tronson: “Ex libris biblio Lauret, ex dono L. Tronson.” It seems that Tronson gave the manuscript to a person by the name of Lauret, perhaps, although this is speculation, after his death; Another small manuscript of the same size also belonged to “Lauret” or “Laur.” See the inscription on the title page of “Dix conferences aux confesseurs”, n.d., Ms. 316, SS, which reads “Ex lib. bibl. Laur.”; According to Joseph Grandet, Tronson gathered a large collection of comparable texts during his lifetime: “He collected with care all the dissertations, Episcopal ordinances, censures and other works that circulated regarding the issues of the time, and enriched the library of Saint-Sulpice with them.” See Joseph Grandet, *Les Saints prêtres français du XVIIe siècle, ouvrage publié pour la première fois, d’après le manuscrit original*, ed. G. Letourneau (Angers and Paris: Germain et G. Grassin. A. Roger & F. Chernoviz, 1897), 325: (“Il ramassait avec soin toutes les thèses, les ordonnances des évêques, les censures et autres pièces qui couraient sur les matières du temps et en a enrichi la bibliothèque de Saint-Sulpice”); The identity of “Lauret” remains uncertain. Louis Bertrand does not mention any Sulpicians by this name in his *Bibliothèque sulpicienne ou histoire littéraire de la Compagnie de Saint-Sulpice*, 3 vols. (Paris: Alphonse Picard et Fils, Éditeurs, 1900); One hypothesis is that “Lauret” was l’abbé de Laurent, a priest in the diocese of Viviers who collaborated with a Sulpician and well-known preacher of polemical sermons named Jean-Pierre de Couderc during a mission against the Huguenots in Vivarais. Tronson sent eight Sulpician priests from Paris to join Couderc after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. L’abbé de Laurent preached alongside these Sulpician priests in April of that year. See Faillon, *Vie de M. Olier*, 2:418–419; See also the article on Couderc in Louis Bertrand, *Bibliothèque sulpicienne ou histoire littéraire de la Compagnie de Saint-Sulpice*, vol. 2 (Paris: Alphonse Picard et Fils, Éditeurs, 1900), 83–87. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

2 “Du Carnaval (SS Ms. 317),” 33–55. The other sermons in the manuscript are titled “Des danseurs de corde” (fols. 56-63 ), “Contre le bal, danses, etc.” (fols. 65-90), “Contre les danses aux chansons” (fols. 91-109), and “Des jeux ou divertissements permis ou defendus” (fols. 110-131). The pages in the manuscript are not numbered. I have given the folio numbers as they would appear if each recto and verso were counted separately starting from the first page of text.

3 The sermons in the manuscript do not name the preacher or preachers who delivered them. The preacher of “Contre les marionnettes,” however, indicates that he had been away from the parish for many years and has
ceremonial splendor referred to physical acts of worship, to ceremonies. Theatergoers chose diabolical ceremonies over saintly ones, the preacher protested. Plays amounted to a perverse liturgy.

The theater’s seventeenth-century advocates countered that equating France’s theater to the Gladiator games and the other bloody entertainments to which sermons like “Contre les marionnettes” referred when sounding the cry of idolatry was a bad faith argument. Such an argument, they pointed out, constituted a refusal to evaluate the seventeenth-century’s theatrical activities on their own terms. Samuel Chappuzeau (1625-1701), for example, asserted that the enemies of the theater who cited early Church Fathers like Saint Cyprian “sometimes cite them wrongly,” and argued that “the Dramatic Poems of our time would not have generally been the object of their severe censure.”

Subsequently, for scholars interested in the relationship between the church and the theater in early modernity, the more interesting question has therefore been the opposite; not “Were plays idolatrous” but “Were masses theatrical?” In other words, did the Catholic Church dislike the theater because it was too much like the seventeenth century’s Counter-Reformation mass?

Researchers from both performance studies and French studies have posed such questions about the overlap between theater and liturgy. Their reflections have highlighted the latent similarities between masses and plays. Samuel Wells, for example, has theorized liturgical action as “the ‘dramatic’ embodiment of both personal (‘lyric’) expression and the public (‘epic’) portrayal of reality.” Researchers who specialize in seventeenth-century France commonly consider a latent similarity between masses and plays as one source of the Church’s animosity toward the theater. Simone de Reyff, for example, notes that the early modern church’s anti-theater stance entailed a paradox because “the theater reveals itself as close in its essence to the recently returned “in this time of fairs and of Carnaval.” He states, “I don’t know how things are now, if there are still some of these charlatans in some corner of your suburb, but I remember that it was a pity a few years ago to see how a certain troupe of acrobats were popular less for their Diogenes than for a number of fools who entertain the populace with God knows what, and if the impudence of the words and the depravity of the postures and movements and the dirtiness of the plots of which they composed their farces were not the best part of the entertainment, after these [entertainers] others could succeed them, if others haven’t already, who can cause as much disorder as the first.” See “Du Carnaval (SS Ms. 317),” 40–43: (“en ce temps cy de foire et de Carnaval;” “vous avez fait donc un jeu et un pase temps de ce qui fut autrefois un acte d’Idolatrie, et apres avoir renoncé aux Idoles, vous faites encore reserve de ce culte extravagant et libertin...” “Je ne scay pas comme vont maintenant les choses; s’il y a encore de ces charlatans a quelque coing de vre faubourg, mais je me souviens que c’estoit une pitie il y a quelques années de voir comme une Certaine troupe de baseleurs estoient suivis moins pour leurs Diogenes que pour un nombre de fols, qui divertissent la populace, Et D. scait de quoy, et si l’Impudence des paroles, et la dissolut ion des postures et des mouvements et la saleté des Intrigues dont ils Composent leurs farces, ne composent pas la meilleure partie du divertissement, a ceux cy en peuvent succeder d’autres, si d’autres ne les ont pas desja suivis, qui peuvent causer autant de desordres que les 1ers”).

4 Samuel Chappuzeau, *Le Theatre françois, divisé en trois livres, où il est traité I. De l’usage de la comedie. II. Des auteurs qui soûtiennent le theâtre. III. De la conduite des comediens* (Lyon: Chez Michel Mayer, ruë Merciere à la Verité, 1674), 17: (“on les cite quelque fois mal à propos,” “les Poèmes Dramatiques de nôtre tems n’auroient pas esté généralement l’objet de leur sever censure”).

5 Chappuzeau, *Le Theatre françois*, 23: (“Ils ont acoustumé de confondre la Comedie avec tous les spectacles de l’Antiquité, & ont de la peine à souffrir que l’on en face quelque différence”); For an examination of Chappuzeau’s context and argument, see Barras, *The Stage Controversy in France*, 95–110; On the status of idolatry in early modern debates about the theater and the recourse to arguments from the early Church Fathers, see Thirouin, *L’Aveuglement salutaire*, 27–54.

An “exaggerated kinship” binds the two forms of spectacle together, she proposes, observing that the Christian mystery of the incarnation, whereby God became man, outlines a drama commemorated through the liturgy, and the liturgy in turn operates theatrically by using words and gestures to make the story of salvation come alive. From this perspective, the Catholic Church held the theater in suspicion because plays did what masses did, but better.

Although Wells and de Reyff highlight significant similarities between liturgical and theatrical activity, they both adopt a theater metaphor as the point of departure for their investigation. In something of the way seventeenth-century priests failed to evaluate the theater in its own right, they begin from an analytical position that makes it difficult to approach the liturgy on its own terms. In order to analyze the seventeenth century’s competition between masses and plays through a lens that belongs neither to one nor the other, in this chapter I will approach the problem from the perspective of visuality. Hal Foster defines visuality as the “social fact” of seeing, a phenomenon that he argues exists in a dynamic tension with vision, or “sight as a physical operation.” He explains:

the difference between the terms signals a difference within the visual – between the mechanism of sight and its historical techniques, between the datum of vision and its discursive determinations – a difference, many differences, among how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this seeing in the unseen therein.

Seminaries taught France’s clergymen that the ceremonies of the mass, when conducted properly, would produce a specific visual effect, which they called éclat. Best translated as splendor or bedazzlement, éclat designated the impression made by certain kinds of surprising, marvelous, or awe-inspiring spectacles. Competition between masses and plays derived from the methods used by French clergymen to generate éclat, or ceremonial splendor.

The liturgical reforms advanced in France’s early seminaries to promote ceremonial splendor intensified competition between masses and plays by causing what Foster calls the “scopic regimes” that governed vision and visuality to work at cross purposes in the two mediums. On the one hand, liturgical reform adopted the same scopic regime that structured the conditions for sight in the seventeenth-century theater, causing liturgical and theatrical visibility to converge. The visible convergences between liturgical and theatrical activities come into focus when masses and plays are considered as events, as bounded occurrences taking place in discrete buildings. Rehearsal practices and performance spaces present two of the most salient points of convergence. The ceremonial expertise required to conduct ceremonies in a way that generated splendor prompted priests to model their sacramental preparation on stage rehearsal, which made clergymen aware of themselves as performers. Meanwhile transformations to the mass’ material setting echoed the new spatial conventions sweeping through theater halls. Consequently, liturgical reform intensified the visible similarities between masses and plays. On the other hand, the scopic regimes that organized liturgical and theatrical visuality began to diverge in the seventeenth century. This divergence, more difficult to detect, comes into view when masses and plays are analyzed as repertoires, or what I call performatic formations; in other words, as ways

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7 Reyff, L’Église et le théâtre, 12: (“le théâtre se révèle par essence proche de l’expérience chrétienne”).
8 Reyff, L’Église et le théâtre, 12: (“la parenté foncière des deux formes de spectacle”).
10 Foster, “Preface,” ix.
11 Foster, “Preface,” ix.
of organizing and dispersing bodies and objects in space and time. Although liturgical and theatrical repertoires mobilized similar visible elements – people from a wide swath of the social spectrum, bodies gathered in confined spaces, expensive objects and clothing, candles, decorations, raised platforms, and trained specialists whose expertise enhanced display – they organized and dispersed these elements in distinct ways, ways that proved incompatible.

The liturgy’s logic, best characterized as supplemental, naturalized ceremonies by causing the elements that composed the mass to continually overflow into other domains of parish life, like the home and the street. This overflow, or ceremonial extension, thereby enhanced priestly and divine authority by weaving liturgical splendor into the fabric of everyday sense perception. By contrast, what René Bray has called “the law of concentration” began to structure theatrical practices in the seventeenth century as theater apologists, playwrights, and their patrons acquired a taste for plays that observed the unity of action, time, and place.¹² The competition between the Catholic Church and the theater thus operated on two levels in the seventeenth century. As the content of the liturgical and theatrical repertoires converged, visible similarities between masses and plays exposed the artfulness, but also potentially the artifice, involved in ceremonies. Meanwhile, as the logic that organized liturgical and theatrical repertoires diverged, the theater’s tendency to concentrate and mark off time and space into unities interfered with the liturgy’s need to absorb bodies and objects into its all-encompassing extension. Churchmen who took action against plays and actors therefore did so in order to defend liturgical events from emptiness and the liturgical repertoire from erosion.

**Ceremonial Splendor**

Churchmen prized éclat in the wake of the Protestant Reformation because ceremonial splendor forged a link between seeing and believing, between the Eucharistic wafer that the celebrant consecrated during mass and the conviction that it contained God’s presence. Éclat helped solve a performance problem that arose from the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, which held that the consecrated bread became Jesus Christ’s body: the bread did not look very alive. According to Catholic doctrine, the wafer’s substance transformed into Jesus’ body after the celebrant stated the words Jesus spoke to his disciples when breaking bread with them at the Last Supper: “Take, and eat of it, all of you. For this is my body.”¹³ And yet, the Eucharistic wafer did not look any different after being consecrated. The material characteristics of the bread – its “accidental” qualities – remained the same. The divine presence remained invisible. The performative speech act that inaugurated this presence produced no visible proof of its efficacy beyond the performances that encircled it: the priest’s bent knee, his raised hands, his movement toward the altar, and the genuflecting worshippers who gazed upon the elevated wafer in adoration.¹⁴ In sacramental contexts, therefore, ceremonial éclat served to make manifest the divine presence that Catholics believed resided in the consecrated host. In the words of Jean-Jacques Olier (1608-1657), founder of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, the divine presence

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¹³ In seventeenth-century France, the mass was still said in Latin. However, by the second half of the century a Parisian could buy a French translation of the Roman Missal, like the one I have cited here. See *Missel Romain selon le règlement du Concile de Trent, traduit en français* (Cologne: Chez Jean de la Pierre, 1692), 19–20: (“Prenez, & mangez-en tous. CAR CECI EST MON CORPS”). Capital letters indicated the moment in which transubstantiation occurred.

¹⁴ For a helpful summary of the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation in the seventeenth century and an interesting analysis of transubstantiation in semiotic and performative terms, see Cousinié, *Le Saint des saints*, 19–21.
remained “hidden, without outwardly emanating any splendor from its person.” Rather, the divine presence entrusted the Church with the responsibility of “spreading its splendor through the outer aspect of ceremonies.” Éclat endowed the small, round wafer with liveness. Activities that compromised ceremonial splendor by interrupting the liturgical repertoire’s functioning or implying that ceremonial action entailed artifice consequently cut to the heart of all that Catholics held dear in the seventeenth century.

Éclat resulted from behaviors that treated the wafer as if it were a person. The liveness-effect that ceremonial splendor created did not belong to just any kind of person, but to a person of high rank. Éclat entailed the idea that a person of noble extraction exuded authority in a way that could be immediately recognized by strangers. Early moderns expected a majestic presence to radiate éclat, and a person who did not generate éclat but possessed an office that granted authority would struggle to retain his or her status. Although Jesus had many non-royal epithets – the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the Word, the Good Shepherd – Catholics believed that the divine presence in the Eucharist possessed majesty. As Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629) explained in his Discours de l’eucharistie (Discourse on the Eucharist), “Jesus-Christ must be regarded in the Eucharist in three ways,” the first of which Bérulle described as “his presence on the earth as King and sovereign of his people.” In light of the divine presence’s majestic aspect, when Olier argued that liturgical ceremonies should “preach to the eyes,” as discussed in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, he compared the ceremonies of the mass to the ceremonies that encircle a king at his coronation. After drawing his reader’s attention to two ceremonies in particular – “the adorations and genuflexions that he [the priest] does with his arms open over the Altar” – Olier asks rhetorically, “If one prepares so many ceremonies for the crowning and the Sacre of Kings, what must one not do to consecrate the Son of God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords?” He continues:

If Kings prepare themselves with so much care for the bedazzling functions of Royalty, where they seem to leave the ordinary state of things in order to appear truly the Kings of their peoples in all the splendor of their majesty, what must not Priests do who, common men that they are before the Sacrifice, enter by this action into the quality of Our Lord ...
to take their place in the Heavens among the Blessed… What respect, what preparations
does a simple man not need in such divine work?"20

The royal comparison contained two messages for Olier’s readers, many of whom were
seminarians training for the priesthood: To conduct ceremonies well, you must practice and
prepare; the reason you must prepare is that your ceremonial action must reveal God’s divine
majesty in all its splendor.

Visual representations of royal and divine authority provide a glimpse of how early
moderns imagined éclat. They depicted éclat as rays of light emanating outward from the
person, place, or thing that possessed majesty, nobility, or honor. For example, Louis XIV’s use
of the sun as an emblem for his majesty drew directly on the association between rays of light,
the authority proper to a king, and éclat. When he declared war on Holland in 1672, Louis XIV
issued an engraving titled “Devises a la gloire du Roy sur ses conquestes dans la Hollande”
(Emblems to the glory of the king for his conquests in Holland).21 The engraving featured four
emblems, each accompanied by a title and four lines of verse explaining its significance.22 The
first emblem, titled simply “The King,” depicted a sun, followed by lines announcing his éclat
(Figure 1):

\[
\text{In all the splendor (éclat) in which one wants me to appear} \\
\text{Art cannot express with her most beautiful pens} \\
\text{Either my strength or my rays.} \\
\text{It belongs solely to me to make myself known.} \text{23}
\]

Of course, neither seventeenth-century Catholics nor their kings invented the association
between rays of light and majestic splendor. As Louis Hautecoeur notes, the emblem of the sun
for kings has a legacy reaching back to the ancient world.24 Even Louis XIV, although he used
the sun emblem extensively after his personal rule began in 1661, was already greeted as a
“rising sun” at his birth.25 According to E.H. Ramsden, the halo or nimbus, the symbol
associated with royal sun cults, appears in artwork produced by a wide array of religious

20 Olier, Explication des cérémonies de la grande messe de paroisse, 3: (“Si les Roys se preparent avec tant de soin
aux fonctions éclatantes de la Royauté, où ils semblent sortir de l’estat ordinaire pour paroistre véritablement les
Roys de leurs peuples dans toute la splendeur de leur majesté; que ne doivent faire les Prestres, qui d’hommes
communs qu’ils sont devant le Sacrifice, entrent par cette action en qualité de Nostre Seigneur … à prendre place
dans le Ciel parmy les Bien-heureux … Quels respects, quels preparatifs ne faut-il donc pas pour un simple homme
dans un employ si divin?”).
21 “Devises a la Gloire du Roy sur ses conquestes dans la Hollande”, 1672, Salles des estampes M92731, BN; For
Louis XIV’s use of art and representation to promote his authority during the Dutch War, see Peter Burke, The
Fabrication of Louis XIV (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 75–83 For example, according to Burke Louis
XIV transformed his palace at Versaille into “the palace of the sun” in the 1670s and 1680s.
22 The second, third, and fourth emblems depicted a cock for the “strength of the King’s presence,” a seaway amid
waves for his “power,” and a pomegranate tree for the Queen, who had just given birth to the Prince of Anjou,
thereby reaffirming the king’s fertility. See “Devises a la Gloire du Roy (BN, Salles des estampes M92731)”:
(“force de la presence du Roy,” “puissance”).
paroistre / L’art ne peut exprimer par ses plus beaux crayons, / Ny ma force ny mes rayons, / Il n’appartient qu’a
moi de me faire connostre”).
traditions from India to Rome from as early as the fourth century. Light rays, like sun rays, signaled a fusion of divinity and kingship.

In the same way that early moderns, drawing on this long-standing visual trope, imagined Louis XIV’s majesty as radiant light, they represented God’s presence in the Eucharist by picturing light shining forth as it would from a king. In Christian art after the fourteenth century, depictions of God in his kingly aspect as the Eternal Father frequently featured a “nimbus of rays diverging in a triangular direction.” An anonymous painting which, according to Sulpician tradition, Olier commissioned shortly before his death deploys a triangular nimbus to denote God the Father (Figure 2). Titled *La messe* (The mass), the painting depicts the ceremony known as the elevation, when the celebrant – facing the God-king rather than worshippers – raised the Eucharistic wafer over his head after consecrating it so that the faithful standing behind him in the nave could adore the divine presence it contained. Éclat in the form of light rays emanates from the figure representing God at the top of the painting. Similarly, although halos commonly encircle the heads of saints and kings in Christian art, the Christian tradition typically reserves for representations of the divine an enlarged nimbus – called a “glory” – that surrounds a figure’s entire body. An engraving from the title page of a late-seventeenth-century French

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26 Ramsden traces the halo to Iranian art and ideas, and in particular to the Mithraic cult: “[I]t may be assumed with some confidence that the halo of Buddhist and Christian art is not a symbol of doubtful origin and meaningless value, but a specific attribute of kingly glory, bestowed by God, by Ahura Mazda, Lord of Wisdom.” See E. H. Ramsden, “The Halo: A Further Enquiry into Its Origin,” *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 78, no. 457 (1941): 123–131.


28 Olier’s nineteenth-century biographer and hagiographer, Étienne-Michel Faillon, attributes the painting to Olier’s initiative based on a passage from the Vie written about Olier by his immediate successor, Alexandre le Ragois de Bretonvilliers. I cite the passage below. If correct, Faillon’s claim places the genesis of the painting in the mid-1650s. Faillon published an engraving of the painting, along with an interpretation of its contents. See Étienne-Michel Faillon, *Vie de M. Olier, fondateur du séminaire de Saint-Sulpice*, vol. 3, 4th ed. (Paris: Poussielgue frères, 1873), 142, 176–178; However, the exact date of the painting’s creation as well as the artist who painted it remain unknown. It hung for years in the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice in Paris until it had darkened with grime. After being restored between January 2006 and November 2007, the painting now hangs in the entryway of La Solitude, the retirement home for priests of the Society of Saint-Sulpice located in Issy-les-Moulineaux, a small town outside Paris. The conservationists who restored the painting estimate it was created at the end of the eighteenth century or beginning of the nineteenth century, although their report does not explain how they arrived at this conclusion. Sulpicians believe it was created, at the very latest, in the early eighteenth century. Bretonvilliers’ statement about the piece suggests that even if the painting were created at a later date, a sketch already existed during Olier’s lifetime. The restoration was conducted by Geneviève Guttin under the direction of Gisèle Caumont, who bears the title “conservateur délégué des Antiquités et Objets d’Art des Hauts-de-Seine.” Bertrand Saillart of the Conseil Général Hauts-de-Seine sent me a copy of the restoration report as a PDF. See Geneviève Guttin and Gisèle Caumont, *Rapport de restauration de la couche picturale “Le Sacrifice de la messe”*: *Maison de retraite des prêtres de Saint Sulpice “La Solitude”*-Issy-les-Moulineaux (Conseil Général, Hauts-de-Seine, 2007). When I conducted my research in 2010, there were no pictures of the painting and it did not figure in any of the online image or art databases I consulted. Until I went to visit La Solitude on 19 May 2010 to photograph the painting, thanks to the kind invitation of Saint-Sulpice’s retired archivist Irénée Noye, the Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Saint-Sulpice did not even have a picture of it; Faillon’s engraving was recently reproduced in C. Davy-Rigaux, B. Dompnier, and D.-O. Hurel, eds., *Les Cérémoniaux catholiques en France à l’époque moderne*: *Une littérature de codification des rites liturgiques, Église, liturgie et société dans l’Europe moderne* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2009), 271; A close-up of the priest and his assistant serve as the cover for the recent edition of Olier’s treatise on ceremonies, see Jean-Jacques Olier, *L’Esprit des cérémonies de la messe: Explication des cérémonies de la grand’messe de paroisse selon l’usage romain*, ed. Claude Barthe and Michèle Debuecker ([Perpignan]: Tempora, 2009).

translation of the Latin mass used a “glory” to designate God’s divine and kingly presence in the consecrated Eucharist (Figure 3). The engraving depicts a monstrance, a vessel used for displaying the Blessed Sacrament, or consecrated host exposed for adoration at times other than the mass. Rays of light burst from the monstrance on all sides, enveloping it in an elliptical halo.

Obviously, Louis XIV did not actually emanate rays of light when he appeared in public. Nor did a visible halo radiate from the consecrated Eucharist wafer when placed on display. The visual trope of rays of light designated what French subjects were supposed to see, were taught to see, and wanted to see when they saw the king or the holy host. Such images do not depict what Foster calls the “datum of vision” but rather convey its “discursive determinations,” or perhaps more accurately its performatic formations. 30 La messe and the engraving of a monstrance shrouded in glory provide clues about how performatic gestures – bodily movements that instantiated or reiterated a social relation – realized the “social fact” of seeing éclat. Both of these images incorporate bowing bodies into the depiction of éclat. Figures in the act of genuflection respond to the rays of light in each image, and their bowing bodies help create the nimbus that encircles the consecrated wafer. In La messe, eight rings of genuflecting worshippers kneel around the altar. The worshippers who kneel on the paved floor at the altar’s base represent the earthly church. 31 They gaze up at the consecrated host in the celebrant’s hands. Above them kneels the heavenly church, composed of saints, martyrs, apostles, and angels, all of whom turn their eyes either toward the holy host or toward the rays of light that shine down from the Heavenly Father at the top of the painting. 32 Their collective genuflections and adoring gazes form a “glory” around the Eucharist. Similarly, in the engraving of the monstrance three winged angels, who bear censers like clergymen at an altar, kneel in a semi-circle in the foreground. They face the exposed host, their eyes turned toward it in adoration. Above them hover cherubs, ensconced in the clouds and light that form the monstrance’s nimbus. These figures signal the performance apparatus that made liturgical visuality possible.

As a scopic regime, the visual experience of liturgical éclat required a performance apparatus that joined two movements, framing and overflow. The bowing bodies in La messe and in the monstrance engraving suggest how performatic gestures created a dynamic of framing and overflow so as to engender a social experience comparable to seeing light emanate from the majestic presence in a Eucharistic wafer. First, the bodies in each image frame the holy host. Framing has a special relationship to presence. In an essay on the function of frames in relation to seventeenth-century paintings, for example, Louis Marin emphasizes the frame’s importance for highlighting the presence of the work it surrounds. “[T]he frame makes a work autonomous in visible space; it places the representation in a state of exclusive presence,” writes Marin. 33 “By

31 Faillon, Vie de M. Olier, 3:178.
32 Faillon, Vie de M. Olier, 3:178.
means of a frame, a painting is no longer simply given to be seen among other things; it becomes an object of contemplation.”

Bert O. States identifies the question “under what conditions is presence brought about?” as central to theories of performance. His answer – which builds on the work of Richard Schechner – is that presence erupts as such when we “[see] behavior through a deliberate frame.” The frame’s presence-inducing function makes it possible to posit that the ceremonies of the mass imbued the holy host with liveness by heightening worshipper awareness of the altar as a site of intensified presence, the kind of presence suited to someone of high rank around whom all activities revolve. Although neither image offers a literal depiction of worshippers at mass, the Catholic faithful did indeed learn to orient all their liturgical actions toward the altar. The social fact of seeing éclat thus depended on the physical involvement of worshippers in its production. The more actively they framed the altar with their bodies, the more likely they were to “see” the divine presence in the Eucharist.

However, framing also bears a close relationship to performance and introduces, along with an awareness of presence, the possibility of artifice. The convergences between the visible scopic regimes adopted by masses and plays during the seventeenth century resulted from this duality inherent in the function of framing devices. As Schechner argues, “any action that is framed, presented, highlighted, or displayed is a performance.” Or, in the words of States, “We might say that framing and presence are the two slopes of the keystone that holds up the arch of performance.” Whenever the framing devices that generated presence during mass drew too much attention to themselves, liturgical activity could slip down the slope into performance. As Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait note in their study of theatricality, since antiquity the theater’s opponents characterized performance as “illusory, deceptive, exaggerated, artificial, or affected.” The very devices that framed the altar to produce éclat, whether material or gestural, were therefore the precise devices that had the potential to discredit the divine presence, making whatever liveness a worshipper saw in the holy host vulnerable to being dismissed as an illusion, as empty theater.

The second feature of the bowing bodies in La messe and in the engraving of the monstrance suggests how the ceremonies of the mass not only framed the altar but also counterbalanced the possibility that these framing devices signal performance instead of presence. In both images, the bowing bodies overflow the frame they help create. Ceremonial overflow naturalized éclat and created the impression that the intensified presence experienced at the altar could, should, and would endure beyond the present. La messe shows this overflow.

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34 Marin, “Le cadre de la représentation et quelques-unes de ses figures,” 347: (“Par le cadre, le tableau n’est pas simplement donné à voir parmi d’autres choses: il devient objet de contemplation”).
36 States, “Performance as Metaphor.” 16.
37 A comparison between the type of seeing required to adore the Eucharist and the type of seeing characteristic of spiritual visions would be well worthwhile. Pierre-Antoine Fabre’s analysis of the way early modern artists depicted Ignatius of Loyola’s visions suggests they imagined the experience of spiritual seeing as éclat doubled back on itself: “As if the person seeing occupied the place of the seen, as if, at the extreme, Ignatius saw nothing other than himself seeing - seeing what? Seeing light,” writes Fabre. See “Les visions d’Ignace de Loyola dans la diffusion de l’art jésuite,” 822: (“Comme si le voyant tenait lieu du vu, comme si, à l’extrême, Ignace ne voyait rien d’autre que lui-même voyant- voyant quoi? Voyant de la lumière”).
38 Schechner, Performance Studies: An Introduction, 2.
with particular clarity. Each ring of worshippers fades into the distance and disappears beyond the frame’s border, creating the impression that the “glory” formed by their bodies extends beyond the painting. In the monstrance engraving, the wings of the angels on the right and left sides of the image, as well as one cherub on the right side, stretch beyond the engraving’s edge. Éclat reaches beyond the engraving, overflows its frame. More significantly, each image, when considered in its original context, positioned the spectator as a participant in the ceremonial actions depicted within the frame. These images invited the people who viewed them to bow in adoration of the holy host, extending the image’s éclat beyond the frame into the spectator’s body. In the same way that figures in La messe who disappear at its edges suggest that the divine presence in the Eucharist, manifested by its “glory,” extends beyond the painting, when viewers bowed while contemplating one of these images their bodily movements extended éclat beyond the altar’s space and beyond the mass’s time.

Performance theorist Rebecca Schneider’s concept of “performance remains” helps explain why liturgical éclat required ceremonial overflow, and also why ceremonial overflow had the capacity to counteract charges that the mass was artificial. The phrase “performance remains” captures the idea that certain kinds of performances stick with us even though performance, as traditionally defined, disappears in the moment of its realization. In Catholic teaching, however, the divine presence did not disappear once realized. The consecrated wafer did not stop being Jesus’ body when the celebrant lowered his hands after the elevation. Rather, the divine presence in the Eucharist simultaneously occupied the past, the present, and the future. The performance apparatus that made the divine presence manifest could not, therefore, rely on framing alone. As an engraving from a seventeenth-century devotional book shows (Figure 4), when the priest raised the consecrated bread above his head, devout Catholics trained themselves to see Jesus’ crucifixion as present before their eyes in the uplifted host between the priest’s hands; as behind them in the historical past, represented in the etching as Christ’s cross being raised on Calvary; and as ahead of them in an eternal time to which believers aspired after death, represented by the cherubs who in the engraving flutter by the altar. Schneider would say the Eucharistic presence “tangles or crosses temporal registers.” In her inquiry into how and why some performances have a high potential to stick with us, she found performances that “remain” deploy material and gestural elements in a way that tangles temporal registers, creating an experience in which “the past is given to lie ahead as well as behind.” Such performances evoke the “authentic” and the “real” by refusing to disappear. For example, whenever a parishioner’s gestures recalled the mass in an alternative context, like the genuflections Catholics said at home with morning or evening prayers, the mass’ performance apparatus continued to operate even if the mass as an event may have already ended that particular day. I therefore propose that the ceremonies of the mass created the impression of tangled time by alternating back and forth between framing and overflow, mingling bursts of intense presence with actions that prolonged that presence beyond the event’s horizon. On the one hand, liturgical ceremonies created a sort of human halo around the altar, indicating the plenitude and majesty appropriate to God’s person, while on the other hand these same ceremonies, when performed and repeated not only in the church but also outside it, caused the mass to remain in worshippers’ bodies as they

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42 Schneider, Performing Remains, 22.
43 Schneider, Performing Remains, 12.
passed from the sanctuary out into the city. Without both of these movements, ceremonies failed to produce splendor.

**Convergences**

Ceremonial techniques that conveyed the now-ness of God’s presence in the consecrated wafer used gestures as framing devices. These framing devices, which churches increasingly complemented through décor that drew the worshipper’s gaze toward the altar, caused the visible similarities that gradually accentuated the kinship between liturgical and theatrical events. Clergymen learned to master these framing devices through rehearsal, which at the same time turned priests into performers. I will first discuss the pedagogical methods by means of which seminaries taught clergymen to conduct ceremonies, showing how on the one hand priestly rehearsal endowed churchmen with the precision and expertise required to produce ceremonial splendor while on the other hand revealing the artifice involved in ceremonial action. Then I will explain how ceremonies generated an impression of presence by elaborating a pulsing frame of bodies around the altar, a frame enhanced by material modifications to church interiors.

The documentary traces that make it possible to reconstruct the ceremonial practices taught in seminaries and the pedagogical methods used to teach them consist of seminary handbooks and règlements, or rules, conserved at France’s Archives nationales, in the manuscript room at the Bibliothèque nationale, and at the private archives of the Society of Saint-Sulpice in Paris. More of these sources have survived from the Seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet – founded in the 1620s by Olier’s older contemporary, Adrien Bourdoise (1584-1655), and formally recognized as a seminary by ecclesiastical authorities in 1644 – than from the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice. Two manuscripts from Bourdoise’s seminary, now held at the Archives nationales, offer especially rich detail about ceremonial practices. Manuscript MM 475 compiles the règlements that outlined each seminary instructor’s responsibilities and guided their pedagogical decisions, while manuscript MM 492 records how ceremonies were supposed to be conducted in the parish church to which the seminary was attached. Although comparable sources for the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice do not exist to confirm that instructors at Olier’s seminary employed exactly the same pedagogical approach, Olier inherited from Bourdoise the emphasis he placed on ceremonial expertise. In 1633, Olier received some of his earliest liturgical formation at a pre-ordination retreat run by priests from Bourdoise’s ecclesiastical community, and three letters exchanged by Olier and Bourdoise in 1642, the year Olier founded his own seminary, testify to the sympathy that united their pedagogical objectives. Oliers nineteenth-century biographer and hagioagrapher, Étienne-Michel Faillon, goes so far as to refer to Bourdoise as Olier’s “teacher in divine worship.” The pedagogical practices developed at Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet therefore presented Olier with one of the primary models on which he based his seminary’s instructional techniques.

Priestly Rehearsal:

The similarities between masses and plays in the seventeenth century began with the priest’s physicality. The first generation of seminary founders, appalled by the variance they witnessed in ceremonial practices from parish to parish as well as by the bodily comportment of priests, very explicitly proposed actors as the model for priestly ceremonial preparation. Bourdoise’s maxims, published posthumously, record him as saying:

A Preacher would be embarrassed if he had made a noticeable mistake in a Sermon: Likewise an Orator lecturing before a Prince [or] an Actor on Stage; to this end they all study and prepare themselves and rehearse an infinity of times in order to be accepted and succeed according to their pleasure and honor. And (what is deplorable) no one worries himself one bit during the divine Office, which is recited before and in the presence of the divine Majesty, to make a hundred mistakes due to lack of preparation. Is there any faith among churchmen?47

Seminarians who studied at Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet heard these maxims on a regular basis. Seminary règlements listed Bourdoise’s maxims as one of the books on the rotation of devotional texts read aloud during meals in the refectory, as well as one of a smaller list of books about “ecclesiastical discipline” that provided the material for a short reading every evening.48 The maxim refers to actors in part to shame priests. How could men whose gestures rendered service to the King of Kings care less about their ceremonial skills than performers of a more worldly sort? Preachers and orators, however, did not pose a particularly shameful comparison. Bourdoise considered preaching less important than ceremonies, but he did not deny the importance of the pulpit. By lumping preachers, orators, and actors into one category, the maxim gave its hearers cause to consider entertainers as examples for ceremonial preparation and to think of their own work in relation to stage players.

Where did Bourdoise acquire his ideas about rehearsal? As theater historian John Golder notes, “rehearsal has always been by definition an intensely private activity,” all the more so in the seventeenth century because “premodern France held the play on the stage in much lower regard than the play on the page,” with the result that public performances of stage plays, let alone the techniques used by actors to prepare, received less discussion than one would now expect.49 The register maintained by the orator of Molière’s troupe, for example, contains only eighteen instances of words that refer to rehearsal – the term répétition recurs thirteen times, and the term préparation appears five times – in a manuscript that covers thirty years of the troupe’s performance activity.50 Early modern distain for rehearsal makes Bourdoise’s attention to this

47 Adrien Bourdoise, L’Idée d’un bon ecclésiastique ou les sentences chrétiennes et cléricales de Messire Adrien Bourdoise, d’heureuse mémoire, prestre de la Communauté de Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet (Paris: Chez Jacques de Laize de Bresche, rue S. Jacques, audessus la Fontaine S. Benoist, à l’image Saint Joseph, 1684), 31: (“Un Predicateur montroit de confusion, s’il avoit fait une faute notable en un Sermon: Si un Orateur en haranguant devant un Prince, un Comedien de mesme sur un Théâtre...; à cet effet les uns & les autres estudient, se preparent, & repetent une infinité de fois, &c. afin d’agréer, & reüssir à leur plaisir, & honneur. Et (ce qui est déplorable) on ne se soucie point dans les divins Offices qui se recitent devant & en la presence de la divine Majesté, de faire cent fautes, faute de preparation. Y a-il de la Foy parmy les Ecclesiastiques”).
50 Golder, “Molière and the Circumstances of Late Seventeenth-Century Rehearsal Practice,” 251.
practice significant. Without examining Bourdoise’s personal history, the Jesuit collèges, which used theater to teach rhetoric to elite young men, would present themselves as an obvious source of inspiration for a method of priestly training that deployed theater-like techniques.\(^{51}\) However, Bourdoise did not receive a Jesuit education. Rather, it seems likely that he absorbed information about actors from the people he encountered during a period of relative nomadism between 1604 and 1612, before he founded the ecclesiastical community that would grow into the Seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet. His father, who worked as a lower magistrate, notary, and solicitor at the local court in the small town of Brou, died when Bourdoise was seven, leaving his family impoverished.\(^{52}\) Without financial resources, Bourdoise taught himself to read and obtained a piece-meal education on his way to the priesthood while working first as a shepherd but then as a law clerk and a lackey.

Bourdoise’s affiliation with the lower legions of the legal profession – a group that frequently put on plays – would have acquainted him with amateur theater performance. From as early as at least the early sixteenth century, law clerks in France had formed festive associations called the Basoche. They performed farces and satires in front of the magistrates every May, and were sometimes hired by city governments to perform during royal entries and other civic events. The Basoche were in decline by the early seventeenth century, but “survived longest in Paris,” where they had abandoned farcical plays for comedies and tragedies.\(^{53}\) From his fellow clerks and lackeys, Bourdoise could have gained an idea of the skills needed by actors and the preparation required to deploy those skills well. He worked for eight years, from age twelve through twenty, as a clerk for the court solicitors in the towns of Brou and Illiers, and then served briefly as a clerk for the Parisian solicitors after moving to the city.\(^{54}\) Although his biographers do not indicate whether or not Bourdoise participated in – or criticized – Basoche associations, his stint as a law clerk occurred during a period when his colleagues were still performing plays.\(^{55}\) Likewise, even though Bourdoise’s religious aspirations would have prevented him from attending the theater, he arrived in Paris at a time when according to theater historian Sara Beam the city was enjoying a resurgence of farcical performance. Bourdoise’s fellow lackeys belonged to a demographic that loved attending shows from the theater pit, often getting into trouble there.\(^{56}\) Although the evidence allows for nothing more than speculation, Bourdoise’s fellow clerks could have provided a model for rehearsal as they prepared their plays, while the appreciation his fellow lackeys expressed for plays could have alerted Bourdoise to the power a well-rehearsed performance could exert over its audience.

Whatever the extent of Bourdoise’s theater knowledge, he grasped that a priest’s ceremonial objectives required the same kind of learning necessary for stage-playing. The pedagogical methods developed at the seminary founded by Bourdoise suggest that he meant the


\(^{56}\) Beam, *Laughing Matters*, 150.
comparison between priests and actors in earnest. At the Seminary of Saint-Nicholas du Chardonnet, seminarians learned to conduct the ceremonies of the mass and the sacraments through rehearsal and role-play. The règlement for the ceremonies instructor, or Maître de Cérémonies, initially refers to these activities as “exercises,” a term with religious connotations. After an opening paragraph praising the importance of ceremonies, the règlement states, “in the seminary we have always been in the practice of making [seminarians] exercise them [the ceremonies] very carefully and of having them practiced with devotion and piety.”  

As Antoine Furetière’s Dictionnaire universel notes, “‘Exercise’ is used in devotional matters,” giving as an example the phrase “The exercise of the Christian, which is that which a Christian must do every day. He attends to the exercises of piety.” By the second page of the règlement, however, the activities in question begin to involve objects that in a truly sacramental situation would have religious value but that in the context of an “exercise” functioned like props. In these instances, the word répétition, or rehearsal, replaces the idea of exercise. Unlike the term exercice, répétition had a distinctly theatrical connotation. According to Furetière, répétitions were not only “very useful to school children for learning their lessons,” but also essential to performers: “Musicians must do many rehearsals of their concerts, and actors of their plays, before presenting them to the public.” The handling of objects in preparation for ceremonies that laity would witness prompted a subtle shift in the semantic register, introducing the entertainer as the model for preparation.

The term répétition, as its association with both students and actors reveals, encompassed two meanings now central to the notion of performance. Performance theorist Marvin Carlson sums up these meanings in the phrases “keeping up the standard” and “the display of skill.” Répétitions helped students do well in school so that they can keep up a standard. As Carlson observes, “when we ask how well a child is performing in school, the emphasis is … on the general success of [their] activity in light of some standard of achievement which may not itself be precisely articulated.” In a related vein, musicians and actors rehearsed so as to hone their skills for display before a public. Carlson notes that the quality that “makes the performing arts performative” is that “these arts require the physical presence of trained or skilled human beings whose demonstrations of their skill is the performance.” In seminary documents, the passage from “exercise” to “rehearsal” marked a transition from the private practice of clerical piety to the public display of specialized priestly skills, or to the priest as performer.

The first instance in which the règlement for the Maître de Cérémonies passes from “exercise” to “rehearsal” makes the relationship between répétition and performance – in the
sense of an activity that involves the display of skills in keeping with a standard – clear. The word répétition occurs in reference to the activities conducted to practice masses said for the dead. These ceremonies required clergymen to properly manage an object whose prop-like nature was known by all in attendance, an empty coffin called a “representation” that stood in for the dead person for whom the mass was celebrated. Furetière defines this kind of “representation” as “a false coffin of wood covered with a funerary cloth, around which candles are lighted during a service for the dead.” Clergymen had to walk around the “false coffin” while singing and arrange themselves in a precise order. The règlement notes:

Sometimes we teach how to do the processions for the dead… Furthermore we do a rehearsal of how to go to the offering at masses for the dead. How the Station must be done after the mass around the representation while we sing the libera.

Given that lay people could not enter the chancel the “representation” would be placed in the nave - unless the mass was said for a deceased priest – making these ceremonies doubly public in that they unfolded in the part of the church reserved for worshippers and for non-sacramental, performance-like activities such as preaching. The next activities referred to as “rehearsals” in the règlement involved candelabras, censers, and the objects required to receive communion. As with the masses for the dead, these ceremonies required churchmen to keep up a standard publicly in a way that involved the display of skill. For example, the règlement indicates that,

From time to time we lead the little officers of the week to the chancel to make them do a rehearsal of how to accompany the celebrant with the candelabras when, during the Magnificat and the Benedictus, he goes to incense the altar, the crucifix in the nave, the relics, etc.

The “little officers of the week” – those tasked with minor ceremonial jobs – had to learn to properly manage sacramental objects, in this case candles, so that when they followed the celebrant into the church’s most visible spaces, like the altar and the nave, they performed well.

The often public nature of seminary rehearsals underscored the clergyman’s status as a person who performed, who displayed his skills in front of spectators who had the power to judge whether or not he lived up to a standard. Seminarians rehearsed publicly in the parish church once per week at five o’clock in the evening. This weekly rehearsal, led by the Maître de Cérémonies, focused on the liturgical officers whose ceremonial responsibilities during mass brought them into closest contact with the altar, namely, the celebrant (who consecrated the bread), the deacon and subdeacon (who read scripture and stood near the celebrant), and the acolytes, thurifers, and cérémoniaires (who held candles, carried incense, and led processions).

Periodically, the seminary held a public rehearsal in which seminarians practiced general

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63 See “Representation” in Furetière, Dictionnaire universel: (“un faux cercueil de bois couvert d’un poile de deuil, autour duquel on allume des cierges, lors qu’on fait un service pour un mort”).
64 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 115r–115v: (“Quelquefois on instruit la maniere de faire les convoys des Morts... De plus on fait repetition de la maniere d’aller a l’offrande aux Messes des Morts. Comment la Station se doit faire apres la messe autour de la representation pendant qu’on chante le libera”).
65 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 115v: (“Quelquefois on conduit au Choeur les petits officiers de la semaine pour leur faire repetition de la Maniere d’accompagner le Celebrant avec les Chandeliers lorsque pendant le Magnificat et le Benedictus il va Encenser l’autel, le Crucifix de la Nef, les Reliques, &c”).
66 See the folios titled “Reglement de la pratique des ceremonies de l’eglise pour tous les ordres mineurs et majeurs ou sacrez et autres fonctions ecclesiastiques” in “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 114v–116r.
67 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 114v.
liturgical ceremonies, like how to help another priest put on his sacramental robes, how to walk in procession, or how to enter and exit the chancel. After each rehearsal, priests received comments and advice about how to improve, much like what we would now call directors notes, and seminarians were not allowed to perform a ceremonial function unless they had rehearsed it in front of their superiors “and been judged capable.” These public rehearsals, during which the objective of the Maître de Cérémonies was “to make everyone notice everything special (particulier)” about the ceremonies being practiced, had an instructional value not just for seminarians but also for the laity. By watching priests rehearse, the laity learned how to judge, which in turn reinforced the performance quality that infused ceremonial splendor.

Whereas public rehearsals of ceremonies constructed the clergyman as a performer who displayed his skills in keeping with a standard, these rehearsals largely avoided the implication that priests played roles in the way that actors played parts. Private rehearsals, however, taught seminarians the sacraments using role-play. In these private rehearsals, held in the seminary’s salle des exercices, or classroom, the distinctions between priest and comédien, prop and ceremonial object, sacrament and play broke down. The exercise transformed the classroom into a sacramental scene, a scene that represented the form and content of a sacrament without actually accomplishing a sacramental action. A mise-en-scène created by the instructor prepared the scene. The instructor’s règlement included a long list of objects needed for each sacramental rehearsal and stated that he had to “see and examine that all the things necessary for the administration of the sacrament that they [the seminarians] must exercise are entirely and exactly prepared in the classroom.” The list for the baptism rehearsal blends theater and sacrament most thoroughly. The list’s title treats the rehearsal as a sacrament proper, labeled “Memo of that which it is necessary to prepare for the Sacrament of Baptism.” The list itself, however, mixes props with ceremonial objects. A doll tops the list, which also includes “a cushion to put under the infant’s head.” Ceremonial objects follow. The list calls for, among other things, two candles, an asperser, and a white stole. Some of these objects, though, would have probably been simulacra. For example, the list includes “the vessel of holy oils” and “a book or Register of baptisms.” Surely the seminarians did not practice baptism with consecrated oil from the sacristy, since to apply it to a doll would have pushed the limits toward idolatry. Likewise, it is unlikely that they practiced recording pretend baptisms in the parish register. The list includes “a desk garnished with pens,” which implies that seminarians did indeed practice writing the details of the play-acted baptism, but probably in a book regularly used for rehearsals.

The sacramental scene created for the rehearsal entailed not just props but also acting, in the sense of pretending to be a person one is not. To apply the oil that represented the holy oil or to write in the book that represented the baptismal register, the seminarian had to play a role. The

68 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 114r–114v.
69 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 26r, 117r.
70 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 105r: (“Il verra et examinera si toutes les choses necessaires pour l’administration du Sacrement qu’on doit exercer sont entieremet et Exactement preparées dans la chambre des exercice”).
71 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 106r: (“Memoire de ce quil faut preparer pour le Sacrement de Baptesme”).
72 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 106r: (“1. La poupée,” “14. Un coussin pour mettre sous la teste de l’Enfant”).
75 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 106r: (“12. Une escritoire garnie de plumes Xc”).
prop lists for each exercise thus suggest that seminary rehearsals did construct “priest” as a role to play. In this role, the seminarian played the lead in a small cast. From among the seminarians who were not already slotted to rehearse sacramental tasks, the instructor selected students to represent the lay people who received the sacraments. These students played roles like godfather, godmother, sick person, or penitent. It does not take too much imagination to conjure up the potential for hilarity and irreverence that such play-acting could invite. The règlement recognized that rehearsing the sacraments opened the door for comedy. It charged the instructor with choosing seminarians who were the least likely to have too much fun, and avoided theatrical language like “role” or part,” preferring the more stately term “office.” It states, “He [the instructor] will name someone from the class (compagnie) from among the most modest and serious to fill the offices necessary for each sacrament, like godfather, godmother, sick person, etc.” Anyone who fooled around by talking or laughing, he “warn[ed] gently and warmly but strongly to keep the prescribed order.” The behaviors chastised by the règlement imply that new seminarians readily treated ceremonial rehearsal like schoolboys or amateurs, playing and merry-making.

If seminarians took the actor’s craft lightly the first time they heard Bourdoise’s maxim, rehearsal introduced them to the work required of performers. The instructor taught them to rehearse like professionals. He directed rehearsals with diligence, ensuring the class could get through two sacramental scenes each time they met. He prevented interruptions. And he demanded precision:

He will make the exercise begin with the most decorum (bienséance) possible and will work to make sure every necessary detail in the performance (dans la pratique) of each sacrament is observed exactly and entirely, both for the preparations and exhortations and for the ceremonies right down to every sign of the cross ordered by the Ritual, and he will not permit that [the seminarians] do them in a rush, as if running, wanting to imagine everything and not do half the things they must do.

Seminarians had to rehearse not only the outer motions but also the inner actions and dispositions that accompanied each ceremony. Although sacramental rehearsals did not constitute sacraments, they were therefore not “empty.” Seminary directors maintained that even ceremonial exercises, when conducted “exactly and religiously,” “produce a very great piety in

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76 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 105r: (“Il nommera quelqu’un de la compagnie des plus modestes et sérieux pour remplir les offices nécessaires de chaque Sacrement ex. g. parain, marain, malade, Ex”).
77 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 105r: (“Il ne suffrira pas non plus qu’on s’amuse a causer et rire, sil y en avait quelqu’un il les adviendra doucement et charitablement, mais fortement de garder l’ordre prescrit”).
78 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 105r: (“Il tachera de faire pratiquer avec telle diligence que deux puissent faire exercice chaque fois autant que sera possible selon le temps”).
79 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 105r: (“Il ne permettra pas pendant l’exercice actuel qu’aucun interompe l’exercice par quelque proposition ou difficulté que ce soit”).
80 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 105r: (“Il fera commencer l’exercice avec le plus de bienseance qu’il sera possible et tachera de faire observer exactement et entièrement toutes les choses dans la pratique de chaque sacrement qui sont nécessaires – tant pour les préparations et exhortations que toutes les Ceremonies jusques a un signe de croix ordonné dans le Ritual et ne permettra pas qu’on les fasse avec precipitation, en courant, en voulant tout supposer et ne faire que la moitie des choses qui sont a faire”).
81 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 105r: (“1. Il demandera et fera repeter chaque fois a ceux qui eront nommez pour exercer quelles dispositions interieures il faut apporter pour administrer dignement et fructueusement un Sacrement et quels actes il faut produire”).
the heart of the faithful when they see them observed with honor and deference.”

The seriousness with which seminary directors treated ceremonial rehearsal can therefore shed light on the serious attitude they adopted toward the theater. Laurent Thirouin has noted that “The enemies of the theater are those who believe the most in its power.” Such rehearsals would have instilled an appreciation for the comédien’s performance and alerted churchmen to stage-playing’s plenitude.

Courtly Bodies:

Seminary rehearsals precipitated a visible convergence of priestly and theatrical styles of embodiment. The bodily appearance that clergymen learned to master through rehearsal corresponded to the gestural conventions that, according to theater scholar Sabine Chaouche, early modern actors had to master in order to portray characters of high rank. Like actors and orators, whose craft, in the words of a seventeenth-century rhetoric manual, required a “beautiful rhetoric of the body,” early modern priests who conceived of ceremonial splendor as the product of ceremonies that “preached to the eyes” had to attain what Chaouche calls “bodily eloquence.” To do so, they had to learn to régler – organize, regulate, control – their bodies. Seminary directors, like the theater theorists of the day, referred to this conventional physicality as bienséante, or “decorous.” Manuscript MM 492, for example, urged the sub-prefect at the parish church of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet to make sure that seminarians “maintain at all times a decorous (bien seante), respectful, modest and pious posture.” Similarly, l’abbé d’Aubignac, author of a seventeenth-century treatise on theater practice, urged playwrights not to compose scenes that would cause their actors to “sin against decorum (la bien-séance).” Neither the young men who attended the Seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet – most of whom came from poor families – nor the members of Paris’s theater troupes belonged social strata known for bodily decorum. Seminary-trained parish priests and tragic actors consequently converged in their status as royal subjects from bourgeois backgrounds who attained the marks of decorum through labor rather than birth in order to undertake a kind of work that involved public display.

In seventeenth-century France, the ideal of l’honnête homme, or the perfect gentleman, structured the standards by which worshippers and spectators judged whether priestly and theatrical comportment counted as bienséant or not. The honnête homme possessed a body that could please at court and that also signified virtue and dignity. As Maurice Magendie has

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82 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 104r: (“exactement et religieusement,” “produisent une tres grande pieté dans le cœur des fidelis quand ils les voyent observer avec honneur et avec deference”).

83 Thirouin, L’Aveuglement salutaire, 20: (“Les ennemis du théâtre sont ceux qui croient le plus en son pouvoir”).


86 “Registre de l’autel et du choeur de St. N.D.C. (AN MM 492),” 117v: (“Qu’ils s’estudient a garder tousjours une posture bien seante, respectueuse modeste et pieuse”).


88 For an example of the perfect gentleman’s courtly aspect, see Nicolas Faret, L’Honnête homme, ou l’art de plaire à la cour, ed. Maurice Magendie (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970); For an example of his moral aspect, see
shown, the term *honnêteté* had two overlapping meanings, an aristocratic meaning associated with worldly savoir-faire, and a bourgeois meaning associated with moral uprightness. These two versions of the perfect gentleman did not perfectly coincide. Ecclesiastical proponents of a moral *honnêteté* in fact used the perfect gentleman’s virtuous qualities as a weapon in their attack on aristocratic lifestyles, pitting the bourgeois ideal of *l’honnête homme* against its courtly counterpart. If, as Paul Bénichou argues, the tragic heroes staged by Pierre Corneille epitomized the perfect gentleman’s moral aspect, these two versions of *honnêteté* shared, as André Lévêque points out, a number of *lieux communs*, “subjects about which all the theorists of the seventeenth-century are in agreement, regardless of their moral values,” whether heroic or religious. Standards for bodily decorum fell into this zone of agreement between the aristocratic *honnête homme* and the bourgeois perfect gentleman, between the Cornelian hero and the parish priest.

Bodily decorum demanded a combination of stillness and coded expression. Chaouche details the gestural conventions that composed decorous comportment. “The head must … at all times keep its natural position, which is to say straight” but “without being stiff.” In relation to the perfect gentleman’s “naturally” upright head, a lowered head signaled humility but a head held too high denoted pride, a head that lagged to the side lethargy, and an immobile head brutality. As for the eyes, *bienséance* called for a gaze that achieved control without staring and without contorting the face. “Defaults of the eye, like sideways glances, fixed stares, or a gape made too small by squinting, lascivious glances or overly mobile eyes … confer upon the orator a ridiculous air, and make him the laughing stock of the public,” writes Chaouche. A gentleman did not twist his mouth, leave his mouth half open, show his teeth, or lick, bite, or seal his lips. Nor did he walk too fast, stomp or shake his feet, spread his legs, sway from side to side, gesticulate wildly with his hands, rub his face, spit, blow his nose, beat his chest, shrug his shoulders, clap or play with his hands, or slap his thighs. In other words he moderated his gestures, kept the inside of his body hidden – the interior of the mouth, sounds from the inner cavities – and limited the contact between parts of his body.

Seminary directors called this combination of moderated movement and coded expression “modesty.” A manuscript from the second half of the seventeenth century specified that clerical modesty consisted in precisely the kinds of gestures outlined by Chaouche: “outer

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91 André Lévêque, “‘L’honnête homme’ et ‘l’homme de bien’ au XVIIe siècle,” *PMLA* 72, no. 4 (1957): 622: (“de sujets sur lesquels tous les théoriciens du dix-septième siècle sont d’accord, quelles que soient leurs valeurs morales”).


composure, carriage, posture, gestures, eyes, gait, a grave rather than loose bearing, eyes that are wise and friendly, a way of walking that is neither affected nor hurried.”

Priestly rehearsals transmitted modesty by teaching seminarians to suppress behaviors that would seem *malséants* – undignified and nondecorous – to observers. A *règlement* regarding “the modesty, respect, and reverence that one must observe during the divine office” instructed seminarians:

> The first thing is that when you are seated to be careful not to lean indecently, or cross your legs, or let your eyes wander here and there, nor put your hands in your pockets, but to observe a modest and honest composition, principally of the head and the eyes…”

As the word “composition” reveals, maintaining a modesty body in accordance with the norms for *honnêteté* and *bienséance* required artfulness, the art of stillness and of mastering conventional gestures for dignity. Like the courtier’s manners or the actor’s rendering of a prince, the clergyman’s modesty had to give aesthetic please to those who saw it. It demanded “grace” and could be destroyed by farcical humor. The *règlement* for the divine office continued:

> The second thing is that when you are standing up facing forward to take care not to stare fixedly at each other for fear of making each other laugh or some other levity, nor to look at those who are coming and going or entering and leaving [the chancel]… It is also necessary to be careful when standing to not have your feed spread apart, leaning in a certain secular fashion first on one leg and then on the other. That is of very bad grace.”

By suppressing gestural habits associated with the peasant’s life, with biological survival, and with the ludic or violent dimensions of human experience, seminary rehearsals crafted the foundations for a noble bearing. Through repetition, encouragement, and reprimand, the *Maître de Cérémonies* forged the following clerical physicality: A seminarian with a modest posture made no sound not required by ceremonies, kept his eyes – but not his head – “modestly lowered,” placed his feet side by side, ensured that his robe covered his knees when he sat and hung to his feet without any openings, held his body straight, and carried his hat or breviary with both hands in front of his chest.”

Seminary rehearsals thus endowed clergymen with a style of comportment fit for court, the physical canvas out of which an actor crafted princes and kings.

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97 These folios, titled “De la Modestie requise aux Ecclesiastiques,” are bound with a manuscript titled “Resolutions arrestées a Paris par messeigneurs les Evesques, et quelques superieurs de seminaires avec Monsieur, mil six cens cinquante sept” (fols. 121r-131v). The folios on modesty do not indicate their year of creation, but I date them as late seventeenth-century based on the surrounding folios. See “Conférences épiscopales”, late seventeenth century, f. 177v, Ms. Fr. 14428, BN: (“En la contenance exterieure, port, maintien, gestes, yeux, marcher, port grave et non leger, maintien gracieux et serieux, gestes modestes, yeux sages et affables, marcher non affeté ny precipité”).

98 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 160r: (“La 1e choses est quand on est assis de prendre garde de ne se point appuyer indecemment, ny croiser les jambes, ny avoir la veue egarée ça et la, ny les mains dans les pochettes, mais observer une composition modeste et honnesté principalement de la teste et des yeux”).

99 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 160r: (“La 2e est quand on est debout tourné en face de prendre garde de ne pas se regarder fixement les uns les autres, de crainte de s’exciter a rire, ou a quelque autre legereté, ny regarder ceux qui vont et viennent qui entrent ou qui sortent... Il faut encore prendre garde estant debout de n’avoir pas les pieds ecartés l’un de l’autre s’appuyant d’une certaine façon seculiere tantost sur une jambe tantost sur l’autre, cela est de tres mauvaise grace”).

100 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 160r: (“avoir la veue modestement baissée”).
Ceremonial Framing:

The courtliness of priestly comportment served a ceremonial purpose. Just as courtiers encircled Louis XIII and Louis XIV, increasing their splendor by framing the king’s person, the modest body priests acquired through seminary rehearsal served to frame the divine presence. Although clergymen participating in mass did not assume the character of a specific prince the way an actor would in a play, seminary directors taught seminarians to think of themselves as servants attending a prince or as courtiers advancing socially in the house of a sovereign. Ceremonial splendor thus entailed a degree of role-playing, supported by the physical signs of *honnêteté* seminarians learned to produce as they incorporated the norms for modesty. In a letter written in 1643 by Olier to a young cleric who had just entered the priesthood, Olier elaborated the royal metaphor:

[B]y entering the clergy, we have declared to you that you enter into [God’s] house to render him service, being thereafter like one of his domestic who must attend continually to his person. This is the reason for the joy that has spread through … the Church … upon your entry … to see that one of her children enters into the house of her prince, and the Court of the king to render it more magnificent. And just as siblings and parents rejoice exceedingly to see the advancement of their brother at Court, and the honor that he receives in the house of their sovereign, in the same way the Church has greatly rejoiced to see you admitted into the holy clergy…

This royal metaphor shaped the way seminarians applied decorum in the sanctuary. They learned to think of the chancel as God’s royal chamber and of the altar as the earthly extension of his heavenly throne. The moral accomplishment of priestly *honnêteté* therefore consisted in

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101 See letter 101, “A un jeun clerc” (9 juin 1643) in Olier, *Lettres de M. Olier*, 222–223: (“En entrant dans le clergé, on vous a déclaré que vous entrez dans sa maison [de Dieu] pour lui rendre service, étant dorénavant comme un de ses domestiques, qui doivent assister continuellement auprès de sa personne. C’est le sujet de la joie qui s’est répandu dans … l’Église … à votre entrée … de voir un de ses enfants entrer en la maison de son prince, et la cour du roi se rendre plus magnifique. Et tout de même que les frères et parents se réjouissent extrêmement de voir l’avancement de leur frère à la cour, et l’honneur qu’il reçoit en la maison de son souverain, de même toute l’Église s’est tellement réjouie de vous voir admis au saint clergé…”); The “entry” to which Olier refers is a ceremony called the Tonsure, when a man received his clerical robes and had the crown of his head shaved. The Tonsure did not constitute an ordination, but it made the tonsured man into a cleric. Churchmen thought of the Tonsure as the doorway to the priesthood. For a history of the practice, see Louis Trichet, *La Tonsure: Vie et mort d’une pratique ecclésiastique* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1990).

102 For example, Olier’s fellow priest, Jean du Ferrier, used the metaphor of the chancel as God’s chamber when trying to restore order among a group of parishioners who tried to force open the parish church’s doors during an outcry against a new tax. Ferrier told them, “And how, my dear friends … could you have dreamed of forcing [the church’s] doors since you would not dare attempt to knock down those of the King’s chamber if we know that he is asleep there?” See Ferrier, “Memoires [ecclésiastiques] de feu Mr [Jean] Du Ferrier,” 278–290: (“Et comment, mes chers amis … avez-vous osé songer à forcer ses portes puisque nous n’oserions entreprendre d’enfoncer celles de la chambre du Roi, si nous savions qu’il y est couché?”); Quoted in Faillon, *Vie de M. Olier*, 2:375–377; Olier used the throne metaphor in his treatise on ceremonies, breaking into a prayer that all priests would learn to treat the altar as the seat of a king: “If holiness were among Men and among the Ministers of your Altar the same as it is among your Angels and your Saints at the foot of your Throne, oh that I would be happy! Make it so, I pray you… In a word, make it so that we render you here the homage that they render you in Heaven in your capacity as King.” See Olier, *Explication des cérémonies de la grande messe de paroisse*, 478–479: (“Si la sainteté estoit parmy les Hommes & parmy les Ministres de vostre Autel, de mesme qu’elle est parmy vos Anges & vos Saints qui sont au pied de vostre Thône, que je serois content! Faites-le, je vous en prie… En un mot, faites qu’on vous rende icy tout l’hommage qu’on vous rend dans les Cieux en qualité de Roy”).
directing the aristocratic skills of the perfect gentleman toward pleasing an invisible king of kings. Belief and make-believe wound together very intimately in this endeavor.

Priestly rehearsal elaborated four primary patterns of restored behavior to frame the altar: multiplicity, directionality, distribution, and synchronization. In keeping with courtly bienséance, these ceremonial sequences focused the attention of priests and worshippers on God as king. In doing so, these framing devices conveyed the immediacy of God’s presence – his now-ness in the consecrated host – by intensifying at least one marker of presence, whether place, time, or action. These techniques for framing the altar produced visible effects that resonated with the impulse toward concentration that reigned in the theater during the second half of the seventeenth century.

Multiplicity framed the altar by outlining the borders of God’s ecclesiastical court. In early modern France, a noble never appeared alone. Louis XIV’s Court at the palace of Versailles exemplified the principle of multiplicity. Versailles housed not just the king and his immediate family but also thousands of servants as well as members of France’s aristocratic families, most of whom possessed both a room in the king’s palace as well as a private family home in the city. According to Norbert Elias, by the mid-eighteenth century approximately ten thousand people inhabited the palace of Versailles. Onstage princes, too, required an entourage. Jacques Scherer notes that the hero in seventeenth-century plays “must always be encircled by secondary characters... He cannot go alone without offending the idea one forms of his power and dignity. He must have a ‘suite,’ all the more numerous the higher the rank he occupies.” Neither could the divine presence, conceived of in royal terms, make a solo appearance. Bienséance demanded that clerical bodies fill the chancel just as courtiers filled the antechambers that surrounded Louis XIV’s room. To this end, seminary directors required seminarians to march in procession two by two to the parish church every Sunday for mass, where those who did not participate directly in the liturgy’s central ceremonies by performing an “office” like subdeacon or thurifer sat in seats that lined the outer edges of the chancel, called stalles. Seminarians processed to the seminary chapel for private masses in the same way, where the règlement for the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice makes it possible to infer that the stalles stretched along either side of the altar creating a frame three rows deep, which seminarians entered starting with the back row, making sure to always begin with the seats closest to the altar. A worshipper who looked at the chancel from the nave would have seen an entourage of men with closely shaven heads and sacramental garments encircling the altar. Although small parishes often had only one or two clergymen – when Bourdoise arrived in the parish of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet, only the parish priest and a vicar served its church – in parishes lucky enough to have a seminary or a large clerical population, dozens and even hundreds of clergymen sat in the chancel during mass. The more clergymen who sat in the chancel, the better.

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103 Elias, The Court Society, 80.
104 Elias, The Court Society, 80.
107 “Reglement général du Séminaire de S. Sulpice (BN Ms. Fr. 11760),” 118r.
108 Descourveaux, La vie de monsieur Bourdoise, 68.
Multiple priestly bodies seated along the chancel walls constructed a clerical frame for God’s presence, sent a strong ceremonial signal regarding his power, and magnified his splendor. Directionality constituted the foundational ceremonial pattern and framing technique learned through priestly rehearsal. Directionality made the human frame around the altar dynamic. In courtly situations, bienséance required an honnête homme to turn toward the person of greatest importance. Seminarians learned to always turn toward objects in which the divine presence resided or with which divine presence was associated: toward the altar, toward the wafer, toward the chalice, toward the crucifix, and toward the Bible. Directionality generated the impression of a majestic presence on the altar by marking the site of God’s abiding. Like a responsive entourage upon a king’s arrival, the clerical bodies that turned toward the altar focused all eyes on the king’s place. A type of ceremonies called inclinations, which included bowing and kneeling, made directionality easy to teach, actualize, and modify. “We note three types of inclinations to observe during the divine office,” explains manuscript MM 492, “The first is the profound inclination, which involves the body and the shoulders, otherwise known as humiliation… The second is the medium inclination, which uses the shoulders and the head… The third is the little inclination which is called a light inclination because it is done with the head only.” Genuflections entailed dropping onto either one or two knees and lowering the forehead ever so slightly. According to manuscript MM 475, new seminarians received a one-on-one lesson in inclinations from a senior seminarian charged with the office of introducteur, or guide, who escorted the new student to the church to teach him “how to do the inclinations when entering the chancel or leaving it.” La messe depicts the power of directionality for producing the impression of full presence. All the bodies in the painting kneel toward the uplifted host, and the golden light that floods the painting’s central panel seems to gather around the consecrated wafer as a result of their combined attention. Whereas directionality framed a place, ceremonial distribution framed an action by giving different parts of the same action to different agents. In courtly ceremonial, the pattern of distribution expressed itself most vividly in the rites that governed a noble person’s routine for getting ready for the day in the morning and getting ready for bed at night, or the lever and coucher. Objects destined to adorn the king’s body passed through many hands of progressively higher rank. When the king dressed, for example, a servant or valet brought the king’s shirt, but handed it first to the dauphin, who then presented it to the king. By the eighteenth century, Marie-Antoinette’s shirt passed ceremonially through as many as four or five pairs of hands.

109 Magendie, La Politesse mondaine et les théories de l’honnêteté, 1:162.
110 “Registre de l’autel et du choeur de St. N.D.C. (AN MM 492),” 10r–11r: (“Nous remarquons trois sortes d’Inclinations a observer a l’office divin. La premiere c’est l’Inclination profonde qui est du corps et des Espaules que l’on appelle autrement humiliation… La seconde est l’Inclination mediocre qui est des Espaules et de la teste… La troisiéme C’est la petite inclination qui est appelée une Inclination legere parce qu’elle ne se fait que de la teste seulement”).
111 Regarding the nuances of genuflection, see the “Avertissement” at the beginning of Quelques-uns des Prêtres de la Congrégation de la Mission, Manuel des cérémonies romaines, tirés des livres romains les plus authentiques, des écrivains les plus intelligents en cette matiere (Lyon: Chez Benoist Bailly, rüe Merciere, à la Verité, 1679), non–numbered page.
112 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 239r: (“[L]a maniere de faire les Inclinations en entrant au choeur et en sortant”).
before she received it. In a similar way, the ceremonies of the mass distributed among multiple agents the actions that prepared the altar. When the celebrant arrived at the altar at the beginning of mass, he incensed it, giving prayers to God in the form of fragrant smoke. However, the priest did not carry the censer himself. The thurifer carried the censer and handed it first to the deacon, who handed it to the celebrant. The fragrant smoke thus passed through three hands before reaching its majestic recipient. This distribution of a single task among multiple agents created the impression of a regal presence by showing its entourage at work.

Synchronization came as close as possible to framing time by framing the mass’s primary ceremonial agent: the celebrant. Synchronization consisted in ceremonial sequences in which multiple clergymen simultaneously carried out physical actions for which one priest was identified, through framing, as the primary agent. The elevation at a solemn mass offers the best example. In a solemn mass, a celebrant had at least two clergymen assisting him – a deacon and a subdeacon – who stood at a slight diagonal behind him on either side. The placement of their bodies thus directed eyes toward the celebrant’s agency. At the same time, the deacon and subdeacon mirrored the celebrant’s gestures, amplifying his body. The handbook from the parish church of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet instructed the deacon: “During all the time … before and after the consecration” to “remain standing to the right of the Celebrant, doing the inclinations, genuflections, and signs of the Cross like the Celebrant.”

Behind the deacon and subdeacon, all the other clergymen filling less important offices during the mass also mirrored the celebrant. A handbook for the ceremonies of the mass published by the priests from the Congregation of the Mission – Vincent de Paul’s ecclesiastical community – specified that “all the other inferior Ministers” who participated in a solemn mass “must … conform to the Celebrant and the holy Ministers.” This meant doing the same ceremonies at the same time, even though the minor officers were not standing at the altar. The handbook continues:

1. They do the signs of the Cross that the Celebrant does over himself. 2. They bow like him toward the Cross at the word Oremus, before the Prayers, as well as at the Name of Jesus, and ... at the other words for which the Celebrant does an inclination of the head... 5. They sit down only ... when the Celebrant and the holy Ministers are seated, and as soon as one of them stands up, they stand up at the same time.

By mirroring the celebrant’s actions, synchronization framed the “now” of his gestures, making each gesture remarkable. Since the celebrant held the Eucharistic wafer – and thus the divine
Ceremonial Splendor

presence – in his hands, synchronization also framed the “now” of God’s body-as-bread, visually suggesting that the celebrant’s exaggerated presence derived not from the ministers who mirrored him but rather from power of the invisible king in the wafer.

Material Framing:

As the slippage between the visible and visual effects of éclat indicates, the ceremonial patterns that framed the altar contained the seeds of ceremonial overflow. Yet, during the second half of the seventeenth century material transformations to church décor reinforced the framing function accomplished through multiplicity, directionality, distribution, and synchronization. Material framing thus helped reinforce ceremonial framing. Steps that raised the altar, tabernacles that centered the altar, and sculptural pieces called retables that framed the altar all focused a worshipper’s eyes back on the consecrated host, underlining the immediacy of the divine presence in the context of the liturgical event. In theatrical terms, these material elements reworked the mass’ “setting.” Sociologist Erving Goffman, who reflects on the way non-theater spaces like restaurants or offices can serve as settings for everyday performances of self, notes that setting “tends to stay put, geographically speaking, so that those who would use a particular setting as part of their performance cannot begin their act until they have brought themselves to the appropriate place and must terminate their performance when they leave it.” It involves things like “furniture, décor, physical layout and other background items...”

Although Goffman uses the term “setting,” his vocabulary provides a way to avoid rigging an analysis of masses and plays with theater analogies. He classifies setting as a type of “front,” a term Goffman uses to refer to “the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance.” Front serves to “define the situation for those who observe the performance,” functioning, in other words, as a kind of frame. Rather than referring to the elements of church décor as setting, I will instead build on Goffman’s vocabulary and use the terms “material front” or “expressive equipment” to designate those physical structures that defined the liturgical situation for seventeenth-century worshippers. The development of a stylized material front for the mass silently conveyed the idea that liturgical ceremonies functioned like a performance, unfolding in a designated place that helped mark in spatial terms the event’s beginning and end.

After opening their chancels, churches who transformed their material front so as to reflect the Catholic Counter-Reformation’s renewed affirmation of God’s real presence in the consecrated host typically used three kinds of fixed expressive equipment to make the altar more visible. These kinds of expressive equipment – steps, tabernacles, and altar pieces – created material resemblances between church buildings and theater buildings that reinforced the visible similarities between parish priests and actors that the adoption of rehearsal practices in seminaries was fostering during the same period. According to Bernard Chédozeau – a literature scholar whose work on liturgical texts led him to examine church architecture – the mother church of the Society of Jesus, called the Church of the Gésu in Rome, provided the paradigmatic design for churches built after the Council of Trent (1545-1563). The church

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built by the Jesuits in Paris reproduced the Gésu’s floor plan with very few modifications.\textsuperscript{123} Called the Saint-Louis, the Jesuits completed its construction in 1641, the same year that the theater’s greatest seventeenth-century patron, the Cardinal Richelieu, finished building a luxurious theater hall in his palace near the Louvre, and one year before Olier arrived at the parish of Saint-Sulpice and launched an effort to rebuild the parish church.\textsuperscript{124} Although the Church of Saint-Sulpice’s renovated floor plan did not exactly match that of the Saint-Louis, by the early eighteenth century its expressive equipment privileged the same “visualization of the main altar.”\textsuperscript{125} The material front that evolved at Saint-Sulpice to facilitate liturgical éclat followed the spirit, if not the letter, of the Saint-Louis.

First, an increased number of stairs elevated the main altar, such that in Chédozeau’s words “the altar offers itself to all eyes.”\textsuperscript{126} These steps facilitated the production of éclat by expressing God’s dignity and rank. A priest named Jean-Baptiste Thiers explained in a treatise on the topic of altars, jubés, and cloisters that the Latin word altare signifies a type of elevation that perfectly expresses in material form Christ’s status. Thiers writes that it “indicates that Altars must be raised… And they must in fact be raised in the Church to the degree … that Jesus-Christ is [raised] above all the Church in dignity and in honor…”\textsuperscript{127} Three wide steps made of marble from Languedoc led to the altar at the Church of Saint-Louis.\textsuperscript{128} Although three had a satisfying theological quality, by the early eighteenth century three steps did not seem like enough for the visibility required by ceremonial splendor. The author of a guide to “everything curious and remarkable” in Paris lamented in 1725 that the altar at the Saint-Louis was too low, which made the celebrant difficult to see. “To tell the truth, this Altar and all its accompaniments are not very well designed,” the guide complained. “It is so low and so sunken that one can hardly discern the Priest when he performs the divine office.”\textsuperscript{129} The guide’s author was not the only eighteenth-century Parisian to want higher and higher altars. Plans for a new altar at the Church of Saint-Sulpice in 1718 provided for three steps leading to the altar, but when the altar was completed in 1734 it actually had seven.\textsuperscript{130} An elevated altar signified God’s rank as king.

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Amédée Boinet, \textit{Les Églises parisiennes, XVIIe siècle} (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1962), 105.}
\footnote{On the Saint-Louis’ construction, see Boinet, \textit{Les Églises parisiennes, XVIIe siècle}, 94–135; Richelieu’s Grande Salle opened on 14 January 1641. See Georges Couton, \textit{Richelieu et le théâtre} (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1986), 37; Richelieu in fact celebrated the inaugural mass at the Church Saint-Louis, which took place on 9 May 1641. See Cousinié, \textit{Le Saint des saints}, 214; For a brief overview of Olier’s efforts to rebuild the Church of Saint-Sulpice, see Louis Bertrand, \textit{Bibliothèque sulpicienne ou histoire littéraire de la Compagnie de Saint-Sulpice}, vol. 3 (Paris: Alphonse Picard et Fils, Éditeurs, 1900), 455.}
\footnote{Chédozeau, \textit{Chœur clos, chœur ouvert}, 50–51: (“visualisation de l’autel majeur”). Chédozeau does not discuss the Church of Saint-Sulpice, but this phrase describes well the priorities that organized the church’s renovations.}
\footnote{Chédozeau, \textit{Chœur clos, chœur ouvert}, 51: ("l’autel s’offre à tous les regards").}
\footnote{Jean-Baptiste Thiers, \textit{Dissertations ecclésiastiques, sur les principaux autels des églises, les jubés des églises, la clôture du chœur des églises} (Paris: Chez Antoine Dezallier, rue S. Jacques, à la Couronne d’Or, 1688), 77: (“marque que les Autels doivent être élevés… Et ils doivent en effet être autant élevés dans l’Église … que Jésus-Christ l’est au desus de toute l’Église en dignité & en honneur…”).}
\footnote{“Inventaire des scuptures et statues de St Louis de la Culture Ste Catherine, fait par Monsieur Mouchy le 8 janvier 1791”, n.d., S 1013 (A), AN; from an excerpt published by Cousinié, \textit{Le Saint des saints}, 219.}
\footnote{Germain Brice, \textit{Nouvelle description de la ville de Paris et de tout ce qu’elle contient de curieux & de plus remarquable}, vol. 2, 8th ed. (Paris: Chez Julien Michel Gandouin, Quay de conty, aux trois Vertus, François Fournier, rue S. Jacques, aux Armes de la Ville, 1725), 173: (“A dire le vrai, cet Autel & tous ses accompagnemens ne sont pas d’une invention fort heureuse. Il est si bas & si enfoncé, qu’on a de la peine à discerner le Prêtre quand il fait l’office divin").}
\end{footnotes}
but also served a practical function by making the ceremonies easier to see, and thus more splendid but also potentially more theatrical.

The increasing elevation of the altar between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries associated the altar with one of the basic, material definitions of théâtre in early modern France. According to Furetière’s *Dictionnaire universel*, in addition to definitions related to dramatic productions, théâtre meant simply an “Elevated area where representations take place, where one presents some kind of spectacle.” In other words, théâtre meant a stage. Furetière describes one type of théâtre in a way that corresponds quite well to an altar, calling it “an area elevated by steps, a scaffold decorated for ceremonies.” Due to its increased height, the altars like the one at the Church Saint-Louis or Church of Saint-Sulpice resembled more and more closely the material definition of a théâtre in a theater hall.

The raised altar also accentuated an already-existing semantic similarity between common phrases used to describe the priest’s ceremonial action and the actor’s theatrical action. Both priests and actors, to borrow Goffman’s language, had to “bring themselves to the appropriate place” in order to begin their performances, the altar or the stage. Likewise, both priests and actors needed to terminate their performances upon leaving these designated places. By the eighteenth century, the same verb described the priest’s and the actor’s arrival at the place appropriate for their performances: monter, or to climb. Both priests and actors had to “climb” onto the fixed expressive equipment essential to their performances, and this climbing was synonymous with activity that defined their professions. The 1727 edition of Furetière’s dictionary notes under the entry for théâtre that “in this sense one says, climb on stage, which is to say exercise the profession of Actor, and leave the stage, which is to say renounce the profession.”

Thiers, who in fact did not want altars to be elevated by stairs, used the same verb to describe the priest’s arrival at the altar. “Today one wants ordinarily three steps at Altars, although this often puts the Priests and other Ministers of Jesus-Christ in an awkward position in climbing onto it,” he grumbled. The seven steps at Saint-Sulpice’s eighteenth-century altar would have shocked Thiers. Although Thiers did not explain exactly why a few more steps around an altar’s base made it offensive, nor did he mention the theater in this particular treatise, his concerns betrayed an anxiety about kinds of material exteriority that drew on features associated with spectacles or the spectacular. Two years earlier he had published a treatise

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Vaugirard, près de la place S. Michel, 1773), 12; According to Corblet, the liturgical books published by bishops, called Rituals, began prescribing three steps for altars as early as the fifteenth century. Charles Borromeo, the sixteen-century Italian bishop whose liturgical reforms provided a model for reform-minded Catholic clergy all over Europe after the Council of Trent, called for five steps. See Jules Corblet, *Histoire dogmatique, liturgique et archéologique du sacrement de l’eucharistie*, vol. 2 (Paris: Société Générale de Librairie Catholique, 1886), 74.

131. "Théâtre," Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel* ("Lieu élevé où on se fait des representations, où on donne quelque spectacle").

132. "Théâtre," Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel* ("Un lieu élevé, où on se fait des representations, où on donne quelques ceremonies").


against entertainments with a long chapter dedicated to arguments for the theater’s prohibition. 

If a priest had to climb the altar like an actor mounted the stage, did the priest only pretend to turn the bread into Jesus’s body? Did the divine presence fade when the priest descended from the altar at the end of a sacramental performance? Elevated altars implicitly raised such questions for an enemy of the theater.

In churches where the fixed expressive equipment manifested the doctrinal re-centering that had taken place at the Council of Trent, two more common features accentuated the altar’s new function as a magnet for the worshipper’s eye. Medieval churches with closed chancels had kept their altars bare until shortly before, or even during, the mass, when candles, a crucifix, relics, and the missal were placed on it. The medieval altar’s physical form thus expressed a theological understanding of the altar as the site of sacrifice, a sacrificial table, rather than the altar as God’s residence. The bare altar had defined a liturgical situation in which the clergy in the chancel turned their gaze upon each object as the ceremonies called for it. The social act of seeing thus unfolded sequentially, one object at a time. After the Council of Trent, by contrast, altars began permanently displaying a receptacle that housed the consecrated Eucharist. This receptacle, called a tabernacle, redefined the sanctuary as God’s abode.

The tabernacle in fact often looked like a palatial temple. Liturgical scholar Jules Corblet writes, “Everyone knows that the tabernacle, in the modern understanding of the word, is a kiosk in the form of a temple or little armoire, placed in the center of the altar’s ledge” – a platform-like shelf installed on the altar to further elevate the tabernacle, crucifix, and other ceremonial objects – “and destined to enclose the holy ciborium,” or the vessel in which the remnants of consecrated hosts were kept between masses. The Church of Saint-Louis’s high altar boasted a particularly palace-like tabernacle (Figure 5), designed in 1641, the same year as the church’s inaugural mass, and completed in 1643. Transformed into a surface displaying God’s presence, the altar with tabernacle attracted the worshipper’s gaze and invited a kind of liturgical seeing that privileged a concentrated site of visible plenitude rather than the sequential gaze fostered by the bare altar. Whereas the sacrificial table enacted God’s presence one gesture and one object at a time, the tabernacle offered the worshipper a fully visible reminder of God’s presence all at once and continuously. In material terms, the tabernacle represented quite literally the concentration and unification of place enacted ceremonially through directionality and synchronization: all these gestures directed the worshipper’s eyes toward a miniature palace in which God’s presence was believed to abide.

The construction of a retable, or altar piece, generally accompanied the raising of the altar and the installation of a tabernacle. As Corblet explains, in its simplest form the retable was a painted or sculpted board that stood on the back edge of the altar’s surface. Its name in French derives from the Latin description of its position on the altar, retro for behind and tabula for

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137 Chédozeau, Chœur clos, chœur ouvert, 29.

138 Chédozeau, Chœur clos, chœur ouvert, 46.


When they first came into use in the tenth century, retables were small and portable, only 60 centimeters high. Churches used them as altar decorations on feast days. By the sixteenth century, however, local lords began competing with each other to endow their parishes with the most elaborate retable. By the seventeenth century, the retable had grown in dimension, complexity, and permanence. A work of craftsmanship grandiose is size and style, Frédéric Cousinié calls the early modern retable a “monumentalité,” a monument of enormous proportions. While the material specifics varied from church to church, these structures generally consisted of a central panel featuring a large, framed painting and flanked on either side by columns or pillars. Two side panels bearing sculptures frequently complemented the central panel, and a second story displaying an additional painting and sometimes topped by an attic often completed the ensemble.

The retable intensified the concentration of visible plenitude created by the tabernacle. Its central panel aligned with the altar so as to show off the tabernacle, providing a dazzling, dizzying frame for God’s residence. The engraving for the retable at the Church of Saint-Louis does not show the tabernacle, but the engraving for the nearby Church of Saint-Eustache depicts how the retable framed the tabernacle (Figure 6). The installation of a permanent retable typically prompted the removal of the relics and tombs that had occupied the area around the altar. Whereas the thirteenth- or fourteenth-century worshipper would have needed to change vantage points to see all the altar’s relics and tombs by walking around inside the chancel, the retable’s ensemble of paintings and statues metaphorically swept these dispersed devotional objects into a condensed space quickly accessible to the eye from a single vantage point. The worshipper’s eye might need to travel across the retable to take in all the representations of the church’s saints, patrons, and angels that flanked its various parts, but the worshipper’s body did not need to move. The retable thus attracted and oriented the worshipper’s gaze. Cousinié, who compares the retable to a background, writes “The longitudinal axis of the church, more or less ‘freed’ of its ‘secondary’ objects, culminates in the [physical] mass and vertical ascension of the architectural screen constituted by the retable and tabernacle of the principle altar… which appears as the … welcoming frame for the ecclesial space.” Whereas the tabernacle transformed the altar into the place where the worshipper’s eye could encounter God’s presence fully in a single glance, the retable drew the worshipper’s gaze toward the high altar, welcoming the devout glance into God’s home.

The retable welcomed the devout gaze into a space fashioned as God’s abode, and thus into a space set apart from the ecclesial and secular spaces that surrounded it. And yet in order to fashion the chancel as God’s home, France’s priests had in fact needed to draw on techniques borrowed from other domains, especially from the court and from the theater. Consequently, the chancel in the seventeenth century was in fact a site of convergence. After 1640, masses and plays increasingly demanded skilled performers – professionals – while churches and theater houses modified their interiors in comparable ways so as to better display the spectacles they

143 Cousinié, Le Saint des saints, 57. Emphasis in original.
144 Cousinié, Le Saint des saints, 77.
145 Chédozeau, Chœur clos, chœur ouvert, 50–51.
offered. As seminary training spread across France, parish priests learned to apply themselves to
ceremonial rehearsal with a seriousness they learned from actors. Likewise, churchmen and
stage-players both aimed, in rehearsal, to acquire the traits of a noble bearing so as to represent
rank on a théâtre, or raised platform, whether a liturgical or dramatic one. Meanwhile, the
conventions for ceremonial practice, like the conventions for dramatic composition, placed a
strong emphasis on the unity of time, place, and action. Priests did not, in general, comment on
the convergences between what they considered good liturgical action and theater performance
or the similarities between church interiors and theater halls. To so do would have been too
dangerous. Protestants, especially in England, already denounced the mass as mere theater and
as, by extension, empty and deceitful. Rather, as the next chapter will show, priestly concern
about the potential for similarities between masses and plays to discredit liturgical ceremonies
translated into tactics for spatial and professional differentiation, tactics that enabled priests to
distinguish church buildings from play houses and clergymen from actors.

Divergences

Although priests did not readily compare good liturgical action – ceremonies that
produced éclat – to good stage-playing, they did compare poor ceremonial conduct to bad
theatrical performance. These comparisons reveal that priests recognized the ease with which
ceremonies could devolve into diversion. For example, in a reflection on modesty written for
seminarians by Tronson, he compared non-decorous ceremonial gestures to bad acting: “It is a
great flaw to walk with affectation, abruptly and mechanically; moving with measured, studied,
choppy steps, serious to the extreme, with a pompous air that is only good for the theater.”148 The
preface to the handbook published by Vincent de Paul’s seminary complained that when priests
learned only a few ceremonial techniques but practiced them with “little order and much
irreverence,” they compromised the mass. Written as a prayer, the preface lamented “the honor
of your Churches and the holiness of the divine Offices [religious services] is nothing to many
but an occasion for babble and a date for diversion.” These comparisons point to the logic that
differentiated the liturgy, in its ensemble as a repertoire, from theatrical spectacles and dramatic
entertainments; to the divergence between theatrical and liturgical visuality.

The order and reverence to which the manual’s preface referred consisted not in the
liturgy’s content – the visible gestures and objects it entailed – but in the liturgy’s organization;
in the way ceremonial splendor linked and dispersed the people, places, and things that helped
create it. Whereas the theater tended toward a law of concentration and fostered a kind of seeing
that Chaouche characterizes as “visual pockets,” the liturgy’s logic tended toward extension.149
Although the production of ceremonial splendor involved ceremonial and material framing to
create the impression of God’s immediate presence on the altar, éclat ultimately had to overflow
its frame in order to avoid devolving into diversion. This overflow, in the context of the mass,
conveyed the eternal and all-encompassing nature of the divine presence. Good liturgical
performance therefore required priests to conduct ceremonies in a manner that not only framed

147 O’Connell, The Idolatrous Eye.
148 Louis Tronson, Examens particuliers sur divers sujets, propres aux ecclesiastiques, et a toutes les personnes qui
veulent s’avancer dans la perfection, vol. 2 (Lyon: Chez Antoine Tomas, Libraire, rue Neuve, à saint Paul, proche le
grand College, 1691), 158: (“C’est encore un grand défaut que de marcher avec affectation, comme par ressort & par
machine; allant à pas comptez, étudiez, entrecouper, graves à l’excès; d’un air plein de faste, & d’une maniere, qui
n’est propre que pour le theatre”).
149 Sabine Chaouche, “Les Spectateurs dans la lorgnette des anecdotiers: fait divers ou fait théâtral?,” *Journal for
but also prolonged the sense of time, expanded the impression of space, and enlarged the horizon of action. In addition, good liturgical performance required priests to teach parishioners to participate in the liturgy’s extension by repeating – or in Schechner’s terms, “restoring” – behaviors both inside and outside the church that were key to the main sacramental event. A mass celebrated with éclat thus figured the altar as a node in an expansive ceremonial web rather than a théâtre that designated an onstage world fundamentally different from the one experienced by its spectators. To work, ceremonial splendor had to erase its backstage apparatus, create continuity between the chancel and the nave, and absorb the secular realm into its folds. A brief excavation of the ceremonial overflow that extended from the altar to the church’s exterior will reveal the logic that organized the liturgical repertoire.

The liturgy’s extension had its seed in the ceremonial patterns that framed the altar to create a burst of “now” associated with the divine presence. So as to also produce the sense of tangled time necessary for a sense of presence that remains and conveys eternity, ceremonial framing had a fragile quality. Each ceremonial framing device contained the potential to overflow the boundaries it set. If a framing device intensified one marker of presence – place, time, or action – it inevitably did so by augmenting another. Directionality, for example, framed the altar as the place, the privileged site, of God’s presence, but simultaneously prolonged the temporality associated with that presence. Directionality amplified time by causing the ceremonial action to remain in the temporality of salutation. Between people, the moment of greeting establishes and acknowledges presence. During the mass, inclinations continually reiterated the temporality of salutation every time an entrance, exit, vestment, word, or object signaled the place of God’s presence. Clergymen bowed deeply toward the main altar every time they approached it wearing a cope – or sacramental cloak – in order to sing or to incense objects. Each time a clergyman entered or exited the chancel for any other reason, a medium bow renewed the initial burst of presence experienced through greeting. Manuscript MM 492 told seminarians, “When entering or exiting the Chancel, or when passing through the middle, you turn toward the altar and you devoutly do a medium inclination[.] [I]f the Blessed Sacrament is exposed visibly, you genuflect.” For example, members of the chorus bowed their heads and shoulders toward the altar before and after announcing a psalm, before and after being sprinkled with holy water, and before and after beginning a procession around the inside of the church. In similar fashion, clergymen did a small inclination, or light bowing of the head, each time they said the name of a person closely associated with the divine presence in the Eucharist, like Jesus, Mary, or the saint to whom the mass was dedicated. Directionality consequently not only located the place occupied by a noble presence but reiterated and prolonged the instant of encounter in which a noble presence dazzled those who met it.

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150 Schechner defines restored behaviors as “strips of behavior” that “can be rearranged or reconstructed,” like “organized sequences of events, scripted actions, known texts, [and] scored movements.” Ceremonies provide a good example of restored behavior. See Richard Schechner, “Restoration of Behavior,” in Between Theater and Anthropology (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 35–36.
151 “Registre de l’autel et du choeur de St. N.D.C. (AN MM 492),” 10r.
153 “Registre de l’autel et du choeur de St. N.D.C. (AN MM 492),” 10v.
Ceremonial distribution, too, framed one aspect of presence while simultaneously expanding another. By framing an action – like the passing of a shirt or the gift of incense – ceremonial distribution also created the impression of amplified space. Distribution afforded a close-up of a single action by slowing it down, parsing it into a sequence, and extending the moment of contact between a noble and his or her entourage. Space therefore expanded in proportion to the frame created through ceremonial action. Each additional agent that handled an object destined for the king or the altar stretched the time of contact and thereby amplified the chancel’s spatial qualities. Walter Benjamin’s reflections on the technique of the close-up used in film – which he sees as replacing something of the aura lost to art when art became autonomous from ritual – sheds light on this phenomenon. He writes, “With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended.”155 He continues, “slow motion not only presents familiar qualities of movement but reveals in them entirely unknown ones ‘which, far from looking like retarded rapid movements, give the effect of singularly gliding, floating, supernatural motions.’”156 Distribution drew attention to the mass as a unified action – God’s servants pay homage to their divine king – by accentuating the ceremonies through which clergymen signaled their reverence. At the same time, the slow-motion effect created by distribution made the area around the altar seem bigger, a space that required a great deal of time to traverse, a space characterized by supernatural motion.

Synchronization, which framed time by framing the “now” of the elevation, also enlarged the mass’ horizon of action by expanding the subject boundaries of the celebrant. All the clergymen who mirrored the celebrant’s actions merged, ceremonially, with his sacramental body, enlarging him. The ministers standing closest to the celebrant during the elevation made this merger visible through physical contact at critical moments. For example, when the celebrant lifted the consecrated host, touch literalized the expansion of his bodily boundaries. Kneeling to his left and right, the deacon and subdeacon each grasped the lower edge of the celebrant’s sacramental robe and raised it as he raised the wafer.157 Synchronization did more than just expand the celebrant’s body. It functioned like a gestural echo, triggering a series of ceremonial resonances that pointed toward without replicating the celebrant’s raised hands. First, the celebrant’s upward gesture rippled outward into light. As he raised his hands, two torch-bearers entered, genuflected, and placed themselves on either side of the altar, echoing the elevation by intensifying the light around it. On a solemn feast day, there might be as many as four or six torch-bearers.158 Behind the celebrant, the elevation rippled not only into the bodies of the deacon and subdeacon, but also unfurled into the body of the thurifer, who fell to his knees behind the subdeacon, put incense in his censer, “and incens[ed] continuously while the holy host and calice were raised.”159 Smoke turned to sound as the thurifer’s incense prompted the cérémoniaire, or master of ceremonies, to ring a hand bell announcing the transformation of

157 “Registre de l’autel et du choeur de St. N.D.C. (AN MM 492),” 51r, 76v.  
159 “Registre de l’autel et du choeur de St. N.D.C. (AN MM 492),” 114v: (“il encense sans interruption pendant qu’on esleve la ste. hostie et le calice”).
bread into God’s body. Sound turned to silence as a hush swept across the chancel in honor of the divine presence the celebrant finally placed on the altar in the form of a wafer. This ripple effect created the visual impression that the objects believed to harbor God’s presence pulsed with vitality. Synchronization thus created the gestural equivalent of rays of light emanating from the Eucharistic bread outward from the consecrated host toward the far reaches of the chancel.

The gestural echo that rippled through the chancel amplifying each of the celebrant’s gestures overflowed into the nave, absorbing the laity into the celebrant’s extended subject boundary. This ceremonial overflow did not occur spontaneously. In the same way that seminarians had to learn how and when to restore ceremonial behaviors so as to generate éclat, the laity, too, had to learn how to participate in liturgical ceremonies. At both the Seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet and the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, Bourdoise and Olier trained parishioners by employing seminarians to run frequent catechism classes – courses that covered basic Catholic doctrine and practice – and to enforce ceremonial norms among worshippers during mass. The catechism at Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet, for example, taught children how to kneel in front of the Blessed Sacrament upon entering the church, how to make the sign of the cross in unison with the deacon when he read the Gospel, how to kneel during the Antiphony of the Virgin, and how to kneel during the sanctus that preceded the elevation. The laity learned to extend even the smallest gestural echoes, like the one created when all the clergymen in the chancel bowed their heads when saying a holy name. The manual published for the seminarians who taught the catechism instructed them to ensure “That when pronouncing the Blessed names of Jesus and Mary they do a reverence if standing, and if seated … they do only a bowing of the head.”

Pamphlets published in the parish about how to attend mass properly reminded adults to kneel as soon as the celebrant reached the base of the altar, and a clergyman charged with the office of doorkeeper circled the nave four or five times during mass to model modesty, wake sleepers, quiet the noisy, and make sure the laity participated as they were supposed to in the ceremonies of the mass. This litany of bows during the mass insistently oriented all bodies

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160 Manuel des cérémonies romaines, 274.
161 Manuel des cérémonies romaines, 274.
162 Reglements et matieres des catechismes qui se font en la paroisse de S. Nicolas du Chardonnet, dressez par l’ordre de Monsieur le Curé dudit lieu pour servir à ceux qui sont employez de sa part à faire le catechisme dans son eglise & autres. (Paris: Chez Gabriel Targa, Imprimeur-Libraire, rue Saint Victor au Soleil d’Or, 1668), 35, 53, 55, 118.
163 Reglements et matieres des catechismes qui se font en la paroisse de S. Nicolas du Chardonnet, 34: (“Que prononçans les Saints Noms de JESUS & MARIE, s’ils sont debout, ils fassent la reverence, s’ils sont assis ils ... fassent seulement une inclination de la teste”).
164 “Instruction familiere pour bien entendre la Sainte Messe,” in Recueil de divers traités concernant l’office des prêtres, ouvrage grandement utile à ceux qui veut s’acquitter dignement de leur devoir (Paris: Chez Pierre Trichard, rue S. Victor, proche S. Nicolas du Chardonnau au Chef S. Jean, [1650s]), sec. 39, pp. 1–4. This pamphlet is one of 59 tracts about ecclesiastical discipline that were each published separately and then bound in a single volume by their owner. The pamphlets do not bear a date, but were probably published in the 1640s and 1650s and authored by clergymen from the Seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet. According to Joseph Grandet, Bourdoise (1594-1655) authored many pamphlets of this sort to distribute them in the parish and circulate them in the countryside. Claude de la Croix (1598-1661), a former seminarian who thereafter taught the administration of the sacraments at Saint-Nicolas, continued authoring and publishing these pamphlets, many of which were subsequently published together under his name; See Croix, Le Parfait ecclesiastique; See also Grandet, Les Saints prêtres français du XVIIIe siècle, ouvrage publié pour la première fois, d’après le manuscrit original, 257–260; Regarding the parish church’s doorkeeper, see “Registre de l’autel et du choeur de St. N.D.C. (AN MM 492),” 143r–145v.
toward the same point, intensifying the altar’s place as the site of God’s presence, but also expanded the mass’ horizon of action to include the bodies of all the worshippers in attendance. Synchronized inclinations absorbed the laity into the one great clerical body simultaneous action produced.

The ceremonial overflow that accompanied ceremonial framing kinesthetically erased any distinction between onstage and offstage, between visual foreground and hidden background, that the altar’s spectacular display inadvertently produced. The bowing bodies at the mass figured the sanctuary as a backless space, an infinitely extendable space that simulated the infinite space-time generated by God’s heavenly throne. Inclinations transformed the sanctuary into a backless space by absorbing all the prepositional relations possible between a body and the altar – à, autour, sous, sur, vers, dans, derrière (to, around, under, on, toward, in, behind) – into a frontal relation. In the same way that a courtier appears before not behind a king, and a king appears before not behind his people, inclinations converted even the dustiest, most obstructed corners of old church buildings into part of the altar’s devant, its front. As a result, proximity mattered more than visibility and the most sought-after seats from which to attend mass were not necessarily those that provided the best view. Since all corners of the church participated in the altar’s devant, seats close to the altar trumped seats far from the altar even if the closer seats offered no view at all. As the church wardens’ register for the parish of Saint-Sulpice reveals, nobles who could afford to build side chapels around the edge of the church attended Sunday mass from these private enclaves, some of which were actually behind the altar.  

The less wealthy but nonetheless well-off parishioners sat in rented benches around the perimeter of the chancel, again flanking the back and sides of the altar, where the high backs of the clergy’s stalles blocked their view of the ceremonies. The poor complained that they had no place to sit at all. Inclinations, a gesture performed before a majestic presence, consequently placed all these bodies in a relation of devant, extending the altar’s front to all parts of the church building through their bowed limbs.

The priest’s task of incensing the altar demonstrates the inclination’s usefulness for generating a space of pure devant. Since the altar corresponded to God’s throne it was imperative that the altar not have a back. Illusions have a front and a back, infinities do not. Incense helped render the altar backless by wrapping it in a cloud of aromatic smoke, but because the priest must pass around and behind the altar with at least his hand in order to apply the incense, liturgical handbooks insisted on the inclinations with extra urgency. The Manuel des cérémonies romaines (1662) published by Vincent de Paul’s Congregation of the Mission describes in detail each movement required during the incensing, emphasizing the repeated inclinations with the word derechef, or “once again.” As soon as the celebrant received the censer from the deacon, he offered a profound inclination to the cross, which sits on top of the altar. The text then begins to highlight further inclinations as the priest incensed the more hidden parts of the altar. First for the right side of the altar and then for the left, the manual repeats, “then having once more done an inclination or genuflection, he incenses in three strokes of equal

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166 Doncourt, Remarques historiques, sur l’Eglise et la paroisse de S. Sulpice, 2:212.
distance the top of the altar toward the back part.”\textsuperscript{168} The ceremonial for the parish of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet specifies that the priest incensed not just the back part of the altar’s surface but the back side of the altar during this process.\textsuperscript{169} While incense erased the altar’s back, inclinations iterated and reiterated its devant.

Thanks to inclinations, the devant of the altar could extend beyond the chancel and nave into the streets, reaching as far as a worshipper’s trained body could go. The catechism manual used by seminarians at Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet instructed them to teach the parish’s children that they must, “In passing before Churches, Crosses or Images of Saints, or before Priests or Monks, offer them reverence.”\textsuperscript{170} The Manuel des cérémonies romaines gave similar instructions to priests, training them to offer a profound inclination whenever they passed a high altar, to genuflect whenever they encounter a priest carrying the Blessed Sacrament, and to offer a medium inclination to any prelate on their path.\textsuperscript{171} And a tract outlining “La journée chrétienne,” or “The Christian Day,” advised adults that “it is necessary to kneel before a devout Image” every morning and night, in addition to offering reverence to the Blessed Sacrament if one encountered it being carried through the city.\textsuperscript{172} By extending the altar’s front along the extremities of the worshipper’s mobile body, inclinations naturalized ceremonies, incorporating the production of liturgical éclat into the practices of everyday life. As long as worshippers anywhere in the world were bowing, the mass overflowed its frame and absorbed the surrounding world.

Sustained by a vast network of devout bodies, modest priests, parish altars, pious images, and sacramental objects, all of which permeated city spaces, the liturgical repertoire’s inner logic and practical organization therefore insulated the ceremonies of the mass against theater comparisons that could otherwise have delegitimized the Catholic rites. Given that the ceremonies of the mass technically did not end when the event of a mass ended but rather rippled out into the street, the full liturgical apparatus could not easily be exposed as false or empty.

**Interruptions**

For liturgical éclat to function as a proxy for divine presence, visuality had to outweigh visibility. The liturgy’s performatic operations – the logic by means of which it organized and dispersed bodies and objects – had to mean more than the visible people and things it deployed. Consequently, although parodies and comparisons between masses and plays posed a threat to liturgical splendor by exposing the mass’s visible elements as potentially artificial, activities that interrupted the liturgy’s performatic operations in fact presented a challenge of much larger proportions. Interruptions could take at least two shapes. As the conflicts between priests and actors in the parish of Saint-Sulpice will demonstrate in the next chapter, a parishioner who

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{168} Mission, Manuel des cérémonies romaines, tirés des livres romains les plus authentiques, des écrivains les plus intelligents en cette matière, 221: (“puis ayant fait derechef inclination ou genuflexion, il encense de trois coups, dans une égale distance, le dessus de l’Autel vers la partie derrière”). Emphasis mine.
\item \textsuperscript{169} “Registre de l’autel et du choeur de St. N.D.C. (AN MM 492),” fol. 25.
\item \textsuperscript{170} Reglemens et matieres des catechismes qui se font en la paroisse de S. Nicolas du Chardonnet, 34–35: (“En passant devant les Eglises, Croix ou Images des Ss ou devant les Prestres ou Religieux, leur faire la reverence”).
\item \textsuperscript{171} Mission, Manuel des cérémonies romaines, tirés des livres romains les plus authentiques, des écrivains les plus intelligents en cette matière, 8–10.
\item \textsuperscript{172} “La Journée chrétienne,” in Recueil de divers traités concernant l’office des prestres, ouvrage grandement utile à ceux qui veut s’acquitter dignement de leur devoir (Paris: Chez Pierre Trichard, rue St. Victor, proche S. Nicolas du Chardonnet au Chef S. Jean, [1650s]), 1–2: (“il se faut mettre à genoux devant quelque devote Image”). This is the 22nd pamphlet in the collection.
\end{itemize}
attended a play instead of Vespers or a crowd outside a theater that did not bow as the Blessed Sacrament passed could interrupt the liturgy’s ceremonial overflow and thereby weaken éclat’s extension. More subtly, activities that downgraded an aspect of liturgical visuality to theatrical visibility could also interrupt éclat’s operations. The secular clergy’s accusation that theatrical entertainments revived pagan idolatry can therefore be read as a complaint that the theater and its players interrupted liturgical visuality by literalizing its object, making the visual visible and thus extinguishing éclat. An idol makes visible what a Catholic can in fact only access visually. For example, by worshiping the image of a saint rather than using the image as a tool to mediate between the seen world and the unseen, an idolater mistakes the visible for the visual.

A closing example from the early eighteenth century will show how an apparently benign stage performance could collapse the visual and the visible in a way that threatened the liturgy even when the play did not approach a religious theme. The great tragic actor, Michel Baron, elicited emotional responses from the audience by breaking majesty’s ceremonial norms onstage in a way that literalized splendor’s performatic operations, its visuality. Baron had begun his stage career in the seventeenth century under Molière and retired in 1691, but returned to the Comédie-Française in 1720.173 He had an acting style his contemporaries, like Elena Balletti of the Comédie-Italienne, described as “true and natural,” but which did not always conform to tragic conventions.174 For example, according to Balletti when Baron played the leading role in Horace, he took Curiae “by the arm and brought it repeatedly to his chest and heart to render sensible the magnitude of his feelings.”175 This gesture bothered Balletti. She maintained that as a hero, Horace should embody the “grandeur of action and the elevation of birth” of a “nature that is worthy of majesty.”176 A nature worthy of majesty would not have used touch in such a direct or abundant way to make its greatness felt. Balletti objected:

In such a case this represents to me the truth and nature not of a hero, but of a citizen, a merchant or a simple foot soldier… I think that a hero could say the same thing with the same force when he finds himself more than six feet away from the person to whom he speaks, by adapting his gaze and his tone of voice.177

174 Elena Virginia Balletti Riccoboni, “Lettera della signora Elena Riccoboni al signor abate Antonio Conti gentiluomo viniziano, sopra la maniera di Monsieur Baron nel rappresentare le tragedie franzesi”, c 1720, http://www.irpmf.cns.fr/IMG/pdf/Elenia_virginia_riccoboni.pdf. This letter was transcribed and translated into French by Valentina Gallo and posted online as part of “Les Savoirs des acteurs italiens,” a digital collection edited by Andrea Fabiano as part of the interdisciplinary program “Histoire de Savoirs.” I was not able to find the French translation; According to Gallo, the letter was first published as Elena Virginia Balletti Riccoboni, “Lettera della signora Elena Riccoboni al signor abate Antonio Conti gentiluomo viniziano, sopra la maniera di Monsieur Baron nel rappresentare le tragedie franzesi,” in Raccolta d’opuscoli scientifici e filologici, ed. Angelo Colagerà, vol. 13 (Venice: Christoforo Zane, 1736), 495–501: (“vera e naturale”).
175 Riccoboni, “Lettera della signora Elena Riccoboni al signor abate Antonio Conti”: (“per un braccio e gli porterà replicatamente la mano sul petto ed al cuore per renderli sensibili alla grandezza de’ suoi sentimenti”). Emphasis mine.
177 Riccoboni, “Lettera della signora Elena Riccoboni al signor abate Antonio Conti”: (“[i]n tal caso mi rappresenterà egli la verità e la natura non di un eroe, ma di un cittadino, di un mercante o di un semplice fantaccino… Io credo che un eroe dica lo stesso e con egual vigore lontano ancora sei passi dalla persona a cui
As Balletti’s critique of Baron’s acting choices suggests, she recognized that splendor resulted not from visible effects but from visual impression, that although éclat entailed a certain kind of intimacy it also required distance. A spatial margin should encircle a person of high rank, who should nonetheless be able to achieve a sense of connection without bridging this gap. Baron broke this rule and literalized the visceral contact implicit in an encounter with éclat. Rather than deploying multiplicity, directionality, or synchronization to construct Horace’s greatness as a visual phenomenon, Baron reduced it to a visible representation. Although he made no reference to the Eucharist, his stage-playing thus eroded the fabric of ceremonial splendor on which liturgical éclat relied.

parla, e con gli sguardi e il tuono adeguato della voce gli arrivi al cuore senza avvertirlo col tatto che è al suo cuore che ragiona”); I take the English translation for this quote from Scott, Women On The Stage In Early Modern France: 1540-1750, 237.
Figure 1. An emblem of Louis XIV titled “The King Represented by a Sun,” from “Devises a la Gloire du Roy sur ses conquestes dans la Holland,” engraving, 1672 (BN, Salles des estampes, M92731).
Figure 2. *La messe*, artist and date of creation unknown. According to Sulpician tradition Jean-Jacques Olier commissioned the painting shortly before his death in 1657. It now hangs at La Solitude, the retirement home for priests of the Society of Saint-Sulpice.
Figure 3. The Blessed Sacrament exposed in a monstrance, from the title page of *Missel romain selon le reglement du Concile de Trent, traduit en françois*, engraving (Paris: Chez Jean de la Pierre, 1692).
Figure 4. A devotional image in which a priest performs the elevation while Jesus’ crucifixion recurs above and heaven watches, engraving in *Le tableau de la croix représenté dans les ceremonies de la Ste. messe* (Paris: Chez F. Mazot, 1651).
Figure 5. Tabernacle, Church of Saint-Louis in Paris, engraving, 1643 (BN, Salle des estampes, H30323).
Figure 6. Retable framing a tabernacle, Church of Saint-Eustache in Paris, engraving, 1643 (BN, Salles des estampes, A23066).
CHAPTER TWO

Sacramental Exclusions in the Parish of Saint Sulpice

The opening of the theater [of the Comédie Française] took place at the end of Easter week, on Monday, April 18th, 1689. The new theater hall was located in the territory of the parish of Saint-Sulpice and thereafter it was with the parish priest of this church that the actors of the Comédie-Française had almost all their disputes.¹

On March 30th in 1730, an actress from the Comédie-Française named Adrienne Lecouvreur died in her home, ensconced in rumors of a possible poisoning.² Her friends and admirers considered her the most excellent actress of her day. The author of a pamphlet published the year of her death under the pseudonym George Wink listed her acting skills as one of Paris’ four wonders: “My Lord, you counted, if I remember correctly, four marvels in Paris: 1) the Tuileries, 2) the stage craft of Demoiselle Lecouvreur, 3) the dance of Demoiselle Camargo, 4) the voice of Demoiselle Le Maure.”³ The anonymous author of a book titled Tableau du siècle – identified by Georges Monval as a nomadic actor named Paul Antoine – called Lecouvreur “the delight of all of Paris.”⁴ She lived in a house that had a theatrical past almost as big as her reputation. Racine had died there, and two other famous actresses from the Comédie-Française had previously resided there; Marie Desmares, known as Mademoiselle Champmeslé,

¹ Maugras, Les Comédiens hors la loi, 137: (“L’ouverture du théâtre [de la Comédie française] se fit après la rentrée de Pâques, le lundi 18 avril 1689. La nouvelle salle se trouvait sur le territoire de la paroisse Saint-Sulpice et c’est désormais avec le curé de cette église que les Comédiens français auront presque tous leur démêlés”). All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
² On the poison rumors and Lecouvreur’s death, see Georges Monval, Lettres de Adrienne Le Couvreur, réunies pour la première fois et publiées avec notes, étude biographique, documents inédits tirés des archives de la Comédie, des minutiers de notaires et des papiers de la Bastille (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1892), 40–66.
⁴ Tableau du siècle, par un auteur connu (Genève, 1759), 220; Monval identifies the author of Tableau du siècle as Nolivos de Saint-Cyr, a travelling actor who also went by the stage name Laval and whose given name was Paul Antoine. See Monval, Lettres de Adrienne Le Couvreur, réunies pour la première fois et publiées avec notes, étude biographique, documents inédits tirés des archives de la Comédie, des minutiers de notaires et des papiers de la Bastille, 61–61, n.2.
and Hippolyte Clairon, known as Mademoiselle Clairon. The house sat on a street called the rue des Marais-Saint-Germain, situated in the parish of Saint-Sulpice.

Lecouvreur’s talent earned the fame she enjoyed during her lifetime, but she owes to the parish priest of Saint-Sulpice part of the fascination she exerts over theater historians. Saint-Sulpice’s curé refused to grant Lecouvreur a Christian burial. A seminary-trained clergyman and former seminary director named Joseph Languet de Gergy, he denied Lecouvreur the right to a funeral on the grounds that she had not renounced her profession before dying. Excluded from Christian burial, her body, “accompanied by a squadron of watchmen,” was carried secretly at midnight “like a packet” to the Seine by two porters, who dug a hasty grave in a construction site near what is now the Quai d’Orsay and dumped her body “in a vague plot of land or on the banks of the river.” Her precise resting place remains a mystery, and the circumstances of her interment provoked and continue to provoke outrage. Antoine, the nomadic actor who had called her the delight of Paris, fumed that “The friends of this sublime actress buried her clandestinely, to the shame of all of France, which, out of barbarous ingratitude, refused a small sign of esteem to the ashes of one whose talents they had vigorously applauded.” Voltaire, in whose arms legend has it that she died, penned a poem in protest, vowing to treat her “sad tomb” as a shrine “Though error and ingratitude are bent / To brand with infamy thy monument.” And Monval, more than one hundred-and-fifty years later, exclaimed of Saint-Sulpice’s curé: “And not only religious burial, but – event unmatched in theater history! – all burial was refused to Adrienne Lecouvreur, who had not even a bier for her final bed.”

Lecouvreur’s demise turns traditional thinking about ecclesiastical action against actors on its head. Traditional thinking, focused on religious arguments against the theater, has asked “Why did the Church exclude actors from the sacraments?” However, as Monval accurately underscored, the most remarkable thing about Lecouvreur’s death was not that her parish priest

6 Bonnassies, Lettre à mylord; lettre du souffleur, 56–58, n. 1.
7 Monval, Lettres de Adrienne Le Couvreur, 62–63; (“accompagnés d’une escouade du guet;” “comme un paquet;” “dans un terrain vague ou sur le bord de la rivière”); See also Bonnassies, Lettre à mylord; lettre du souffleur, 77, n. 1.
8 Tableau du siècle, par un auteur connu, 220–221: (“Les amis de cette sublime Actrice l’inhumérent clandestinement, à la honte de toute la France, qui, par une ingratitude barbare, refusait une légère marque d’estime à la cendre de celle dont elle avait si fort aplaudi les talens”).
9 The English translation from which I have quoted can be found at http://www.poetry-archive.com/v/on_the_death_of_adrienne_lecouvreur.html. The French version can be found in Monval, Lettres de Adrienne Le Couvreur, 294–297; On Voltaire’s presence at Lecouveur’s death, see Bonnassies, Lettre à mylord; lettre du souffleur, 72, n. 3.
10 Monval, Lettres de Adrienne Le Couvreur, 62–63: (“Et non seulement la sépulture religieuse, mais - fait unique dans l’histoire du théâtre! - toute sépulture fut refusée à Adrienne Le Couvreur, qui n’eut pas même une bière pour dernier lit”).
threatened to refuse to absolve and bury her, but rather that he actually followed through on this threat and withheld even the slightest of Catholic ceremonies. Indeed, at least in Paris, Lecouvreur is the only actor or actress on record who suffered an absolute denial of the sacraments. When considered from a performance perspective, the sacramental refusals that constituted the Catholic Church’s primary mode of action against actors in early modern France do not look like refusals at all. With the exception of Lecouvreur, all the other sacramental exclusions for which some documentary trace exists resulted in a sacramental reabsorption of the actor: the actor renounced the stage and then the Church reclaimed his or her body through ceremonial action. The new question becomes, how did priests use sacramental reabsorption when confronted with actors? What did a priest gain by temporarily distancing an actor from the parish’s sacramental life before placing him or her at the center of a ceremonial scene?

The parish of Saint-Sulpice provides an ideal case study for the sacramental exclusion and reabsorption of actors under the Ancien Régime. As Gaston Maugras observed in his 1887 study of the legal status of French actors, the majority of spats between priests and actors in late-seventeenth century Paris occurred at Saint-Sulpice. Surprisingly, despite the parish’s importance for the history of the Catholic Church’s stance toward the theater, no one has closely examined the way debates about the theater developed between the priests of Saint-Sulpice and the actors who lived in their jurisdiction. By reconstructing the history of anti-theatrical activity in the parish of Saint-Sulpice, this chapter argues that seminary-trained priests used the threat of sacramental exclusion as a last resort when they felt their professional gains jeopardized or their cultural hold slipping. In such instances, secular priests seized the opportunity to assert the importance of ceremonies by temporarily excluding actors from the sacraments and then reabsorbing them into the liturgical community.

The Parish of Saint-Sulpice

The parish of Saint-Sulpice exhibited a pronounced version of the tensions that characterized the relationship between the Catholic Church and theaters in France during the second half of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Although Maugras points to 1689 as the year in which priests and actors began scuffling with one another at Saint-Sulpice, churchmen and entertainers had conducted their affairs side by side in the parish for more than a century by the time the Comédie-Française opened its doors. The parish housed in close proximity a church, a monastery, and a seasonal fair called the Foire Saint-Germain where, since at least the mid-sixteenth century, acrobats, tight-robe dancers, and marionette players performed each year for a period of approximately three months from early February through Palm Sunday. As shown in the detail from the map of Paris published in 1739 by Michel-Étienne Turgot, the Foire Saint-Germain – which by the eighteenth century, as the engraving shows, was covered by a series of gabled roofs – occupied the lot directly across the street from the Church of Saint-Sulpice (Figure 7). Maurice Albert, in his history of the theaters at the Foire Saint-Germain, describes it as “a true exposition, as diverse in the entertainments it offered its visitors as in the products of every type and provenance that one displayed there.”

An anonymous tract about Mardi Gras published in 1634 urged Parisians:

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11 Albert, *Les Théâtres de la Foire* (1660-1789), 1–2: (“une véritable exposition, aussi universelle par les divertissements offerts aux visiteurs que par les produits de toute espèce et de toute provenance dont on y faisait étalage”).
If you are not easily moved, get yourself by foot or carriage to the Foire Saint-Germain, and there you will see people playing games of chance (torniquets), sleight-of-hand tricks (joueurs de Gobelets), marionette players, tightrope walkers, tobacco users, charlatans, conjurors (passe-passe), and a thousand other crowning examples of folly that one can better imagine than describe...\(^{12}\)

A parishioner, or a priest, needed merely to cross the Rue des Aveugles to reach the fairgrounds and partake of, or take offense at, these entertainments.

The confluence of priests and performers intensified in 1642, when the parish welcomed as secular clergyman named Jean-Jacques Olier as its new curé, or parish priest. A disciple of the great Catholic counter-reformer Pierre de Bérulle – founder of the French Oratory, originator of a devotional and liturgical style that is now called the “French School of Spirituality,” and an advocate for an elevated view of the priesthood\(^{13}\) – Olier wanted to provide adequate training to secular priests. He had founded a seminary the previous year, which he brought with him to his new parish, installing it first in his presbytery and then in a house on the Rue Guisarde which was attached to the presbytery by a garden.\(^{14}\) The seminary was thereafter known as the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice. In addition to the seminary, Olier founded two other ecclesiastical organisms in his parish, a community of priests who dedicated themselves to assisting Olier with his pastoral duties, and a selective group of twelve priests who assisted Olier in running the seminary. The first, called the Communauté des Prêtres de la paroisse Saint-Sulpice (Community of the Priests of the Parish of Saint-Sulpice), was originally composed of the five priests who had joined with Olier in 1641 to found his seminary, augmented by seven or eight priests who had formed part of the Church of Saint-Sulpice’s clergy before Olier’s tenure as curé.\(^{15}\) By 1645, their number had grown to more than 50, and during the second half of the seventeenth century hovered between 60 and 80.\(^{16}\) According to Gwénola Hervouët, approximately 30 percent of the clergymen formed at the seminary joined the Community of Priests after obtaining the

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\(^{12}\) *L’Ouverture des jours gras, ou l’entretien du carnaval* (Paris: Chez Michel Blageart, rue de la Calandre, à la fleur de Lys, 1634), 7; Reproduced by John Lough, “L’Ouverture des jours gras,” *French Studies* 9, no. 3 (1957): 262: (“Que si vous estes difficiles à esmouvoir, allez-vous-en à pied ou en carosse à la Foire saint Germain, et là vous verrez des joueurs de Torniquets, de Gobelets, de marionettes, Danseurs de cordes, Preneurs de Tabac, Charlatans, joueurs de Passe-passe, et mille autres apanages de la folie que l’on peut mieux penser que dire...”).

\(^{13}\) On Bérulle and the French School of Spirituality, see Thompson, *Bérulle and the French School: Selected Writings*, 1–101; On the influence of Bérulle on Olier’s thought and work, see Krumenacker, *L’École française de spiritualité*, 423–453.


\(^{15}\) According to Doncourt, the five priests were François de Caulet, a priest from Toulouse and the Abbot of Saint Volusien de Foix, who was named the Bishop of Pamiers in 1645; Jean du Ferrier, also a priest from Toulouse, who was named by Olier the first Superior of the Community of Parish Priests; Charles Picoté, a priest from the diocese of Orleans, who served as the Community of Parish Priest’s third superior; Balthazar Brandon de Bassancourt, a priest from Parish; and François Houmain, a priest from the diocese of Orleans an the Prior of Sainte Marie e Vieuvy. See Doncourt, *Remarques historiques, sur l’Eglise et la paroisse de S. Sulpice*, 1:203–204; Regarding the number of priests who had been part of the Church of Saint-Sulpice’s clergy under its previous parish priest, see Hervouët, “Le Séminaire de Saint-Sulpice, 1642-1700,” 39. Hervouët does not give their names.

priesthood. The second, called the Compagnie des Prêtres de Saint-Sulpice or the Society of the Priests of Saint-Sulpice, devoted themselves to developing the seminary and training young churchmen. The “twelve,” as they were sometimes called, also traveled to other diocese to help bishops found seminaries in the provinces. Although Olier established their number in honor of Jesus’ twelve apostles, twelve core members proved insufficient. He soon expanded the Society to include 72 associés, or associated members, who supplemented the twelve. In the words of Pierre Boisard, these associates formed “a sacerdotal body, free of all particular obligations, and ready to fly wherever the Bishop judged it best to send them.”

Priests, priests-in-training, and seasonal performers thus all frequented the streets that surrounded the church.

In 1673, professional actors also joined the mix when Molière’s former troupe, displaced after his death from their theater at the Palais-Royal, near the Louvre, moved into an old jeu de paume, or tennis court, in the parish of Saint-Sulpice. Called La Bouteille, or The Bottle, the precise location of the jeu de paume used by Molière’s former troupe is not known. However, the renovated tennis court became known as the Théâtre Guénégaud, and was likely situated near where the Rue Guénégaud intersects the Rue Mazarine, only a few blocks from the Church of Saint-Sulpice. In 1680, by Louis XIV’s command, the actors from the Hôtel de Bourgogne, Paris’ oldest theater, joined those at the Théâtre Guénégaud to form the Comédie-Française, making the parish of Saint-Sulpice Paris’ theatrical epicenter. After a two-year hiatus from the parish, the Comédie-Française returned in 1689 – the date cited by Maugras – and moved into a building even closer to the Church of Saint-Sulpice, a jeu de paume called L’Étoile, or the Star, on the Rue des Fossés Saint-Germain-des-Prés, just two hundred meters from their previous theater hall.

By 1692, the priests in the parish of Saint-Sulpice had an international reputation for refusing sacraments to actors. When the orator from Molière’s troupe, Charles Varlet, Sieur de La Grange, died on March 1st of that year, the rumor spread all the way to Holland that the curé at Saint-Sulpice had refused to bury him. The Mercure galant described and corrected the rumor, reporting that Varlet had actually lived and died in the parish of Saint-André des Arcs, “where he was buried at the hour of noon in the presence of over a thousand people.” While inaccurate regarding the details surrounding Varlet’s death, the Dutch rumor resonated because a

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18 Boisard, La Compagnie de Saint Sulpice, 1:28.
19 Boisard, La Compagnie de Saint Sulpice, 1:35: (“un corps sacerdotal, libre de toute charge particulière, et prêt à voler partout où l’Evêque jugerait bon de l’envoyer”).
22 For a brief overview of the Hôtel de Bourgogne’s role in France’s theater history, see W.L. Wiley, The Early Public Theatre in France (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 133–157; On the fusion of the troupe from the Hôtel de Bourgogne with that at the Théâtre Guénégaud, see Mélène, Le Théâtre et le public à paris sous Louis XIV, 1659-1715, 43–44.
23 The actors from the Comédie-Française were forced out of the Théâtre Guénégaud in 1687 by royal order when the founders of a new school across the street from the theater, the Collège des Quatre-Nations, requested that the king require the actors to find another location. See Mélène, Le Théâtre et le public à paris sous Louis XIV, 1659-1715, 48–51.
story concerning sacramental conflicts between priests and actors at Saint-Sulpice had a certain verisimilitude. Starting with an encounter between a performer from the Foire Saint-Germain and one of Olier’s clergymen in the late 1640s, a string of sacramental negotiations between Sulpician priests and actors punctuated the parish’s history right up to the French Revolution.²⁵

The Paris Commune fires of 1871 destroyed Saint-Sulpice’s parish registers, making it impossible to compile a complete inventory of stage performers who received or were refused sacraments during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, a partial list can be assembled thanks to research published by scholars who consulted parish records before 1871. In quantitative terms, the number of actors to whom Sulpician priests refused the sacraments or from whom they demanded a renunciation of the stage was not exceedingly large. Based on an initial survey of sacramental incidents discussed in Auguste Jal’s Dictionnaire critique de biographie et d’histoire (1876), Pierre David Lemazurier’s Galerie historique des acteurs du Théâtre Français (1810), the Histoire du théâtre français (1745-1748) by Claude and François Parfait, and Étienne-Michel Faillon’s Vie de Monsieur Olier (1873), I count nine. Nonetheless, as the rumors about Varlet’s death demonstrated, the death and burial of an actor could get all of Paris, and even much of Europe, talking. In the words of the Mercure galant, “The death of a man who is so well known and who has been all his life in the King’s entertainments, can become public news.”²⁶ The greater an actor’s renown the better the frame his or her renunciation provided for the activating power of ceremonies.

As one could surmise from even this brief overview, the frequency of sacramental refusals ebbed and flowed in relation to circumstances that brought priests and actors into close contact in the parish of Saint-Sulpice. Sacramental refusals surged after 1680, when the number of professional actors in the parish doubled with the creation of the Comédie-Française.²⁷ In the interest of presenting as complete a picture as possible of the relations between priests and actors at Saint-Sulpice, I will take a moment to list the known sacramental refusals. Indeed, with the exception of Molière – who died in the parish of Saint-Eustache and obtained burial from its curé only after his wife addressed a petition to the Archbishop of Paris²⁸ – almost every incident between priests and actors cited by theater scholars as evidence for the Church’s anti-theatrical action occurred in the parish of Saint-Sulpice.

²⁵ For a discussion of the sacramental refusal that occurred in the 1640s, see dissertation chapter four. The incident is as follows: According to Faillon, the leader of one of the theatrical troupes at the Foire fell sick in 1647 and the Sulpician priest charged with administering the sacraments to him absolved the performer but refused to administer the Viaticum, or last communion, required for Christian burial. The performer promised to renounce the theater, a promise which he apparently kept. According to Faillon, at least one other performer from the same troupe “converted” as a result of the incident. The refusal of Viaticum was then discussed by all of Paris’ parish priests at their monthly assembly, where the clergy approved it as an excellent method for dealing with the theater. See Faillon, Vie de M. Olier, 2:372–374. I argue that this sacramental refusal inspired French bishops to classify actors as public sinners in their diocesan Rituals during the second half of the seventeenth century.

²⁶ Mercure galant, dédié à Monsieur le Dauphin: Mars 1692, 226: (“La mort d’un homme aussi connu, & qui a esté toute sa vie dans les divertissemens du Roy, peut devenir une nouvelle publique”).

²⁷ According to La Grange, the Orator of Molière’s former troupe, the Comédie-Française had enough players to produce plays both in the city and at court simultaneously. See Mélèse, Le Théâtre et le public à Paris sous Louis XIV, 1659-1715, 43–44.

²⁸ For a brief account of Molière’s burial, see Mongrédien, La Vie quotidienne des comédiens au temps de Molière, 16; For a copy of the petition made by Molière’s widow, Armande Béjart, and the Archbishop of Paris’ response, see Madeleine Jurgens and Elizabeth Maxfield-Miller, eds., Cent ans de recherche sur Molière, sur sa famille, et sur les comédiens de sa troupe (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1963), 550–552.
The first incident following the creation of the Comédie-Française concerned an actor named Brécourt, who died in 1685 and whose renunciation I discuss in chapter four. In 1686, the year after Brécourt’s death, an actor known by the stage name Rosimond – born Claude Larose – died suddenly in the parish. Although Rosimond did obtain burial in Christian ground, he was deprived of the ceremonies that normally composed a Catholic funeral because he had not had time to renounce his profession before expiring. Instead, according to Pierre Le Brun, Rosimond was “was buried without Clergy, without light and without any prayers in a part of the Cemetery of Saint-Sulpice where they put infants who die without baptism.” In 1693, an actor in his prime, whose talent had earned him the appellation “the little Molière” fell ill after a copious meal and a bath. Jean-Baptiste Siret Raisin, like Brécourt, had time to renounce the stage before dying, and even did so in front of more than one notary. Jal writes, “Note that the so-called Raisin was not administered and received in holy ground until after having publicly renounced the profession that he had here-before exercised, by an act, in front of notaries.”

Saint-Sulpice’s parish register, according to Jal, contained the following note:

I promise to God with all my heart and with full freedom of mind to no longer perform comedies the rest of my life, when it pleases His infinite bounty to restore my health. In faith of which I have signed, this 4th of September 1693, and has signed: Jean-Baptiste Raisin.

Five years later, the famous Marie Desmares, known as La Champmeslé and remembered as the actress “that Racine formed,” became sick and died on May 15th, 1698 after having renounced her profession. In 1730, as already stated, Adrienne Lecouvreur died without making a renunciation. Her death is the only in the parish of Saint-Sulpice for which an actor was completely denied both burial in sacred ground and funeral ceremonies. Saint-Sulpice’s curé.

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30 Lemazurier, *Galerie historique des acteurs du Théâtre Français, depuis 1600 jusqu’à nos jours*, 1:516: (le petit Molière”).

31 Auguste Jal, *Dictionnaire critique de biographie et d’histoire, errat et supplément pour tous les dictionnaires historiques d’après des documents authentiques inédits* (Paris: Henri Plon, 1876), 1034: (“Nota, que lédit Raisin n’a été administré et recu en terre sainte qu’après avoir renoncé publiquement à la profession qu’il aitvé-devant exercé (sic), par un acte, par devant les notaires”).

32 Jal, *Dictionnaire critique de biographie et d’histoire*, 1034: (“Je promets à Dieu de tout mon coeur et avec une pleine liberté d’esprit, de ne plus jouer la comédie le reste de ma vie, quand il plairoit à [sa?] infinie bonté de me rendre la santé. En foy de quoy j’ai signé ce 4e sept. 1693’ et a signé: Jean-Baptiste Raisin”).

Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Languet de Gergy, chose not to even allow her a grave with the unbaptised infants.\textsuperscript{34} Two years later, in 1732, Catherine-Jeanne Dupré, known as Mademoiselle Dufresne, thought she was on the verge of death and so signed an act not unlike that signed by Brécourt and Raisin. Dupré, however, had the good fortune of regaining her health. She returned to the stage, despite her promise to do otherwise.\textsuperscript{35} Louis Paulin, an actor remembered best, at least by Lemazurier, for playing kings poorly and peasants well, renounced his profession, died, and was buried at Saint-Sulpice in 1770.\textsuperscript{36} Finally, in 1790 François Talma, who played leading tragic and comic roles at the Comédie-Française, wanted to marry. The curé of Saint-Sulpice refused to publish the weddings banns. Talma took his case to a court and then to the National Assembly, to no avail. The following year he solved his problem by leaving the parish of Saint-Sulpice and marrying at the church of Notre-Dame de Lorette, where the vicar agreed to publish his banns.\textsuperscript{37} Although unrecognized as such, the parish of Saint-Sulpice has served theater scholars as a crucial source of evidence about the Catholic Church’s attitudes toward actors.

A history internal to the Society and Seminary of Saint-Sulpice also influenced the rhythm of sacramental refusals. As I explain in the dissertation’s introduction, during the period in which sacramental refusals punctuated the theater’s history – roughly between 1640 and 1730 – the type of priest responsible for sacraments at the parish level was forging a new professional identity through seminary education. These priests were called “secular” priests because they lived and worked in the world rather than living in cloisters or belonging to religious orders. Seminaries, first founded in the late 1630s and early 1640s, taught secular clergymen how to conduct ceremonies, teach, preach, administer sacraments, and act like priests. The years just before and after 1680 marked a turning point for the priests of Saint-Sulpice, as the seminary and the Compagnie that ran it transitioned from a period of early experimentation and expansion to a period of institutionalization. Not only did Olier’s immediate successors pass away shortly before 1680, entrusting the seminary and the parish church to a third generation of leaders entirely trained within what had become the Sulpician method, but this third generation committed itself to formalizing and enforcing the rules and techniques developed by their predecessors.\textsuperscript{38} Whereas the first generation of Sulpician priests had had little to lose and much to gain from interactions with parishioners they considered wayward, by 1680 the third generation considered it their duty to protect and reinforce the authority and reputation established by Olier and maintained by his successors.

\textsuperscript{34} Monval, Lettres de Adrienne Le Couvreur, 61–66.
\textsuperscript{35} Maugras, Les Comédiens hors la loi, 203.
\textsuperscript{36} Lemazurier, Galerie historique des acteurs du Théâtre Français, depuis 1600 jusqu’à nos jours, 1:339–441.
\textsuperscript{37} Jal, Dictionnaire critique de biographie et d’histoire, 1171–1172.
\textsuperscript{38} Olier had served simultaneously as the superior of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice and Society, as the superior of the Society of Saint-Sulpice, and as the curé for the Church of Saint-Sulpice. Olier’s immediate successors divided these functions. Alexandre le Ragois de Bretonvilliers, who Olier had named as his successor before dying in 1657, chose to retain his charge as the superior of both the Seminary and the Society of Saint-Sulpice, but entrusted the function of curé to Antoine Raguier de Poussé in 1658. Bretonvilliers and de Poussé handed over their offices to the third generation within two years of each other. Bretonvilliers died on June 13, 1676, at which point the assembly of Assistants elected Louis Tronson as the superior. De Poussé, who died on July 8, 1680, resigned as parish priest in October 1678, handing the office of curé to Barmondière. See Bertrand, Bibliothèque sulpicienne, 2:51–51, 59–60, 124.
Space and Place: Causes of Conflict

Michel de Certeau’s distinction between space and place sheds light on why the third generation of Sulpicians considered the sacramental reabsorption of actors a priority. Even long before de Certeau popularized theories about space, scholars already articulated priestly authority over actors in terms of place. For example, Monval, pondering Languelet de Gergy’s decision to deny Christian burial to Lecouvreur, framed the curé’s identity in terms of his right to grant access and bar entry to church property:

It was his right, the actress having died without having renounced the theater, to close the church to her, as [the parish church of] Saint-Eustache had once been closed to the remains of Molière. But could he refuse her entry to the cemetery, or to a certain part of the cemetery, accorded even to the author of the Tartuffe…?39

For de Certeau, place and a mode of action he calls “strategy” go hand in hand. He defines a strategy as “the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an ‘environment.’”40 He continues, “A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper (propre) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, ‘clientèles,’ ‘targets,’ or ‘objects’ of research).”41 The parish church, given its preeminent role in everyday early modern life, would seem to constitute a “proper” place in de Certeau’s terms, a place from which churchmen could exert control over the theatrical activities that sprouted up in the surrounding environment. Given the antiquity of church buildings in France when compared to the relative novelty of theater halls in the seventeenth century, one would readily hypothesize that priests could wage a campaign against actors from within the fortress-like walls of their chancels. Likewise, the often improvised nature of theater halls, converted for theatrical purposes from buildings designed for other uses, like tennis, would suggest that such locations remained too permeable to their pasts and to their surroundings to endow players or plays with the strategic benefits of a “place.” Noting quite rightly the power advantages a curé’s possession of a church building potentially afforded him in comparison to actors, scholars have elided individual priests with the institutional Catholic Church and mistakenly assumed that priests enjoyed near hegemonic authority in their parishes.

On the ground, though, this was not how priests experienced their authority, particularly during the second half of the seventeenth century. The episodic, anecdotal rhythm of sacramental refusals suggests, to the contrary, that secular priests in the late seventeenth century used sacramental refusals tactically rather than strategically. Michel de Certeau associates tactical action with marginal figures, with underdogs. He writes, “The place of the tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance... Whatever it wins, it does not keep.”42 Each time scholars, expecting priests to act strategically toward the theater, have examined ecclesiastical action against actors in search of a pattern consistent enough to constitute a policy,

they have been disappointed. As Ferdinando Taviana put it, “that which we know are nothing but episodes (condemnations of actors, interruption of plays, demolitions of theaters, prohibitions against women players, etc.), anecdotes ... that do not manage to form a coherent whole.”  

Could priests really be the underdogs? Not quite. However, priestly action’s tactical coherence comes into focus when one re-evaluates the premise that the parish church constituted a “proper” place. Despite vigorous efforts among the secular clergy in the seventeenth century to reclaim their proprietary say over the parish church’s physical structure and daily uses, the parish’s church building actually functioned like what de Certeau would call a “habitable” space; a polyvalent, permeable, borrowed space constantly transformed by the myriad uses to which those who passed through it turned it.  

While priests used the threat of sacramental exclusion to consolidate the church building’s character as a “proper” place, they used sacramental reabsorption to achieve tactical dominance in liminal areas surrounding the building that, from their perspective, were neither inside nor entirely outside the church.

Parish Church as Habitable Space:

Unlike a “place” – which can close in upon itself, provide a location from which those who occupy it can make plans and observe others, and allow its occupants to remain still without losing their identity – a habitable space, according to de Certeau, “permits exits, ways of going out and coming back in.”  

Although habitable spaces serve as a “local authority” in that the degree of “free play” possible in them fosters credibility and memory and thus belief, the signification that “saturates” habitable spaces remains polyvocal.  

Parish churches in the late medieval and early modern periods could not easily close in upon themselves. The parish’s lay inhabitants passed in and out of them continually, treating the church building as an extension of other public spaces and, by their actions, insisting on the church’s permeable character. Edicts and Episcopal instructions that aimed at regulating the way parishioners used church buildings record, in their attempts at prohibition, the parish church’s permeability. Lay people grazed their flocks, set up markets, hosted festivals, and even put on shows in the church’s cemetery. A compilation of Episcopal instructions from diocesan Rituals – published by a priest at the Seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet named Matthieu Beuvelet — required priests to make sure the cemetery had a “door that locked with a key,” that its land not be “worked or sown” nor used as a grange for beating grain, and most interestingly for the question of theater conflicts, that “No one conduct fairs, markets, dances, manufacturing, or Plays in it,” all of which implied that well into the seventeenth century these practices were common in French parishes.

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43 Ferdinando Taviani, La fascinazione del teatro. La commedia dell’arte e la società barocca (Roma: Bulzoni, 1969), xlii–xliii; Qtd. by Léoni, Le Poison et le remède, 43. I have given an English translation based on Léoni’s French translation of Taviani’s text. Here is Léoni’s French version: (“ce que nous connaissons ce ne sont que des épisodes (condamnations de comédiens, interruptions de comédies, démolitions de théâtres, interdictions aux femmes de jouer etc.), des anecdotes ... qui ne parviennent pas à former un tout cohérent”).

44 Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, xxii.

45 Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, 106.

46 Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, 105.


48 Matthieu Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel par forme de demandes & réponses familières pour servir à ceux qui dans les séminaires se préparent à l’administration des Sacremens, où se voyent recueillies les choses les plus remarquables qui se trouvent dans la pluspart des Manuels quıs sont en usage dans l’Eglise, & la resolution de plusieurs difficultez de pratique, 4th ed. (Paris: Chez Georges Josse, ruê S. Jacques, à la Courone d’Espines, 1659),
also promenaded in the church’s interior, stashed wood and other precious resources in niches, and converted the church into a granary in winter.\textsuperscript{49} They had their local priest announce properties for sale and for rent from the pulpit, buried their family members inside the church regardless of saintliness, and sponsored myriad low masses that priests conducted at the dozens of side altars tucked into the church’s eves during the parish’s official high masses.\textsuperscript{50} In the midst of this bustle, women collected alms in the nave, parishioners made confession in the passageways, and the members of confraternities hurried in and out to pay their dues, attend special services, or convene meetings.\textsuperscript{51} Rather than a static site for unitary action, a parish church served as a hub for polyvalent, heterogeneous, simultaneous activities.

Nor did priests understand the boundaries of the church to end with the building’s walls. The Catholic Church considered itself universal, extending across space and time to encompass all Christians in all lands in the past, present, and eternal future. A parish priest viewed his pastoral activity in light of the Catholic Church’s universal claims, and understood the extension of his church to reach to the parish’s boundaries, thus encompassing all the people, homes, shops, theaters, streets, and everything else that fell inside the expanse of his jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{52} Parishioners, too, treated the church’s walls not as an absolute boundary between an inside and an outside but as a threshold differentiating types of ecclesial spaces. In an effort to try to impose a distinction between inside and outside, bishops repeatedly urged priests not to let parishioners listen to mass from the threshold, stand too long at the church’s door, bring outdoor items like weapons into the church, or conduct business in the church’s exterior areas like the square

\textsuperscript{123}: (“que la porte en soit fermée à clef” “Qu’ils ne soient labourez ny ensemencez d’aucune chose;” “Qu’on n’y fasse ny foires, ny marchez, ny danses, ny manufactures, ny Comedies, &c”); See also the synodal statues issued in 1673 by François de Harlay de Champvallon, archbishop of Paris, which ordered that “The cemeteries must be closed and sealed, such that livestock cannot enter.” One of his predecessors, Hendi Gondi, the Cardinal de Retz and bishop of Paris, prohibited confraternities and priests setting up “buvettes,” or refreshments, in the church or sacristy. See Francisci de Harlay, \textit{Synodicon ecclesiae parisiensis} (Parisiis: Apud. Franciscum Muguet Regis & illustrissimi Archiepiscopi Parisiensis Typographum, 1674), 440, 405–6: (“Les Cimetieres seront clos & fermez, de sorte que les bestiaux n’y puissent entrer”).

\textsuperscript{49} Strolling in churches must have been rampant, both among the laity and the clergy, because almost all the episcopal instructions about church use try to prohibit it. For example, Henri Gondi ordered in 1608: “so that the house of God is a house of prayer, and not of business” all “curates, vicars, and superiors of churches stop all sorts of abuses and profanations, in particular the promenades and other illicit actions that take place too often in the aforementioned churches...” See Harlay, \textit{Synodicon ecclesiae parisiensis}, 408–409: (“Et pource que la maison de Dieu est maison d’oraison, & non de negotiation; auront soin tous les Curez, Vicaires & Superieurs des Eglises, d’empescher toutes sortes d’abus & profanations, particulierement les promenades & autres actions illicites qui se font trop communement esdites Eglises...”); On parishioners who hid things in the church, see Charles Borromeo’s order that “no one takes or keeps hidden in the Church wheat, wood, or other similar things, that are indecent and profane,” printed in an anonymously issued pamphlet on the respect due to churches. See “Ordonnance et reglement fait par S. Charles Borromée touchant la devotion, & reverence avec laquelle on doit se comporter dans les Eglises,” in “Du Respect deu aux eglises,” in \textit{Recueil de divers traitez concernant l’office des prestrces, ouvrage grandement utile à ceux qui veut s’acquitter dignement de leur devoir} (Paris: Chez Pierre Trichard, rue saint Victor, proche saint Nicolas du Chardonnet, [1650s]), 13: (“Que pas un ne retire ou tienne caché dans l’Eglise froment, bois, ou choses pareilles, qui soit indecente & prophanee”).

\textsuperscript{50} On the preference among lay people to be buried inside the church rather than in the cemetery, see Adrien Bourdoise’s indignation about this practice in \textit{L’Idée d’un bon ecclesiastique}, 78–79.

\textsuperscript{51} On confraternities, see Beuvelet, \textit{Instruction sur le manuel}, 209–216.

\textsuperscript{52} See for example “Les Principaux devoirs d’un bon curé,” in \textit{Divers recueils pour les ecclesiastiques} (Paris: Pierre Trichard, rue S. Victor, proche S. Nicolas du Chardonnet, 1657), sec. 6, pp. 1–28. This pamphlet instructs priests to see themselves as responsible not only for what goes on within the church building, but also for visiting the homes of parishioners, knowing their doings, and eradicating irreligious behavior from public spaces like markets and fairs.
beyond its front doors that, from a parishioner’s perspective, still offered the propitious benefits of sacred ground even though technically outside the church building. The church building did not encompass the church. It served as a nexus for a range of assemblies and activities that continually and provisionally appropriated and repurposed its interior and exterior surfaces.

The same rules and edicts that reveal the church building’s porosity also document clerical efforts to diminish the building’s habitable qualities so as to reconstitute it as a proper place. Although the habitability fostered by permeable spaces fosters belief – in de Certeau’s model, at least – place bestows identity. Louis Marin, working with de Certeau’s distinction between place and space in order to analyze representations of Louis XIV, writes, “Places are determined by the things or the beings that occupy them, just as conversely these same [things and beings] find in places the assurance of their identification.” For seventeenth-century priests who viewed belief as a Catholic obligation, habitability merely presented an obstacle to the secular clergy’s professionalism, which they saw as essential to protecting the Catholic religion. As a pamphlet from the mid-seventeenth century titled “Du respect deu aux eglises” (Of the respect due to churches) shows, churchmen had periodically tried to establish the strategic integrity of ecclesial space since the early church fathers. The pamphlet presents edicts and sermons ranging from Saint Augustine to a royal decree issued by Louis XIV in 1650 at the Church’s behest. In France, seminaries and their founders imparted this sense of place-consciousness to the lower clergy, reminding them that their identity rested on their claims over a specific place and the people in it. A pamphlet titled “Des prestres et curez, de leur institution, puissance, droicts & devoirs en l’eglise” (Of priests and curates, regarding their institution, power, rights, and duties in the church) asserted that “Formerly [priests and curates] were not ordained without assignment of a specific place and people submitted to their charge, in places where parishes were established.” The attitude among seminarians toward the chancel conveys

53 Borromeo ordered that “No one stand ... at the door of the Church, in which the people assemble either for Indulgences, Prayer of Forty Hours, or the Titular Feast, so as to do the above things [make noise, ogle women, or talk about business],” and reiterated a few lines later that “No one remain on the threshold of the door to see or to hear the Mass or divine office, unless the Church is too small and cannot hold everyone.” Borromeo prohibited men from bringing hunting dogs, birds of prey, or weapons into the church, and even from leaning them against the church walls or door, and he ordered that “in Churches, Cemeteries, and Squares people do not take care of anything profane, nor lawsuits; that they do not deliver civil or criminal penalties there, that they do not make contracts of whatever nature, or violently demand payment; that public parliaments, synods, and councils are not held there; that announcements and other profane business not be done there.” See “Du Respect deu aux eglises,” 11, 12, 13: (“Que personne ne se tienne aussi à la porte d’aucune Eglise, en laquelle le peuple s’assemble, ou pour raison des Indulgences, Oraison des quarante Heures, ou de la Feste du Titulaire, pour y faire ce que dessus [excite du bruit, user à l’endroit des femmes des gestes et regards qui offensent la chasteté, parler d’affaires prophanes et seculieres]; “Que personne ne demeure sur le seuil de la porte pour voir, ou ouïr la Messe & le divin Office, se ce n’estoit que l’Eglise fut si petite, qu’elle ne pûst contenir tout le monde;” “Qu’êst Eglises, Cimetieres ou Parvis, on ne traite d’aucunes choses prophanes, ny de procez; qu’on n’y donne aucune Sentence, tant civile que criminel; qu’on n’y fasse Contracts, de quelque nature que ce soit, ny exactions; que les Parlemens publics, Syndicats, Conseils, n’y soient point tenus; que les créées, ou autres affaires prophanes ne s’y fassent point”).


the tenacity with which professionalizing clergymen desired a sharp distinction between ecclesiastical “places” and lay “spaces.” Adrien Bourdoise, founder of the Seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet, fumed: “The place of churchmen in the Church while they are alive is in the Chancel, just like that of the Laity is in the Nave.” Professionalizing priests, like those at the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, wanted a building that could close and whose separation from the world around it would validate the secular priesthood’s ecclesiastical power and prestige.

Of course, early modern theaters housed a considerable amount of heterogeneous activity too. Although dramatic conventions imposed the unity of place, time, and action upon the stories presented in the period’s plays, noble spectators sat on the stage, vendors sold refreshments at the back of the theater pit, spectators talked and circulated during performances, men and women stole kisses in the dim and secluded boxes that ringed the hall, pickpockets stole wallets in the parterre, women disguised themselves as men so as to gain entry to the pit, and men provoked each other when the jostling obstructed their view of the stage or challenged the dignity they thought was due their rank. And yet, the theater hall’s polyvalence tended to augment its status as a place because the people interested in promoting the theater did not deem the range of activities that occurred in theater halls before, during, and after plays as officially part of the event. Theater troupes and police officers attempted to curtail and regulate many of the illicit activities that drew people to the theater, whereas the Church, despite its efforts to regulate what happened in parish church buildings, continued to promote low masses, confession, confraternities, feasts, and even alms-giving as official reasons to come to church. No matter how much parish priests wanted to impose a singular use and univocal meaning on the local church building, a religion with seven sacraments and diverse devotional practices could not completely foreclose the mutability of ecclesial space without jeopardizing tenets dear to the Catholic faith.

In the parish of Saint-Sulpice, a practical consideration further frustrated the clergy’s desire to limit the church building’s permeability. After Olier assumed the office of parish priest in 1641, he had almost immediately launched a rebuilding campaign. What better way to affirm the parish church’s integrity as a “place” than to make it anew in a size that conveys its

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57 Bourdoise, L’Idée d’un bon ecclésiastique, 78: (“La place des Ecclesiastiques en l’Eglise durant qu’ils vivent, est le Chœur, comme celle des Laïques est la Nef”).

58 For more information about spectator practices in the early modern period, see Mittman, Spectators on the Paris Stage in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries; Ravel, The Contested Parterre, 36–54.

59 L’abbé d’Aubignac, for example, wanted the theater to function as a “School of the People” which would “attract them without violence,” cause spectators to “lose all thoughts of wrongdoing” and transform their “idleness” into “occupation.” This vision for the theater’s social function required well-mannered crowds. See d’ Aubignac, La Pratique du theatre, ouvre tres-necessaire a tous ceux qui veulent s’appliquer a la composition des poèmes dramatiques, qui pour profession de les reciter en publique, ou qui prennent plaisir d’en voir les representations, 6, 8: (“L’Ecole du Peuple;” “le plaisir les y attire sans violence;” “ils y perdent toutes les pensées de mal faire, & leur oysiveté mesme s’y trouve occupée”).

60 According to Bertrand, “One of M. Olier’s first concerns, upon entering the parish of Saint-Sulpice, was the reconstruction of the church, long recognized as insufficient.” On December 26th, 1642 he met with the parishioners responsible for the church’s finances, the fabriciens, to propose that they rebuild the church. Three months later, the entire parish gathered for a general assembly at the church and voted “d’une voix unanime” to move forward with the project, and on February 20th of 1646, Louis XIV’s mother laid the first stone. See Bertrand, Bibliothèque sulpicienne, 2:455: (“Une des premières sollicitudes de M. Olier, en entrant dans la paroisse,” writes Bertrand, “fut la reconstruction de l’église, depuis longtemps reconnue insuffisante”).
importance and according to a floor plan oriented around the high altar? The construction, however, proceeded slowly and left the priests of Saint-Sulpice with a dislocated, disjointed, partial building – and cemetery – for almost ninety years. According to the parish churchwarden’s register, in 1645 the architect, Christophe Gamard, traced the foundations for a new chancel in what was at the time the church’s cemetery.\textsuperscript{61} Not until 1673, the year that Molière’s former troupe settled into the neighborhood, was the new chancel sufficiently complete so as to demolish the old. After tearing down the old chancel in 1673, the churchwardens had the old nave temporarily connected to the new chancel. Unexpectedly, this temporary hybrid proved quite permanent because the church ran out of funds in 1678, the year the priest who refused sacraments to the actor Brécourt – a clergyman named Claude Bottu de La Barmondière – became curé.\textsuperscript{62} Construction did not start again until 1718, the new nave did not go up until 1723, and the church did not consecrate the new high altar until 1734.\textsuperscript{63} During the intervening years, Saint-Sulpice’s priests and parishioners made do with a tiny nave appended awkwardly to a large chancel, and for at least part of that time the floors differed in height.\textsuperscript{64} During the period in which sacramental refusals to actors surged, Saint-Sulpice’s church building quite literally defined distinctions between inside and outside, open and closed, new and old, chancel and cemetery, structural integrity and structural dissolution. A stymied construction campaign prolonged, in the parish of Saint-Sulpice, the church’s permeability, performing in dirt and stone a polyvocal spatiality detrimental to the strategic authority and priestly identity the clergy of Saint-Sulpice wanted to instantiate. The incomplete church building symbolized their still-precarious professional progress.

Spatial Contestations:

Priestly animosity toward actors at the parish level arose from spatial confrontations. Unable to rely on the church building as “a spatial or institutional localization,” as a “borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality,” the priests of Saint-Sulpice vigilantly asserted their tactical dominance over what, from a twenty-first century perspective, seem like non-church spaces.\textsuperscript{65} Tensions in the parish between priests and actors consequently concerned the marginal areas that surrounded the physical spaces in which religious services and theatrical events took place. Neither masses nor plays kept neatly inside the walls of their buildings. Both types of activities entailed auditory and ambulatory overflow, spilling out into the street. However, whereas the discourses that legitimized the theater figured the noises and people that burst forth from or crowded around a theater hall as accidental to the form’s status as an art – a play would still be a play if people outside the theater hall could not hear it – according to priests, the ceremonial sounds and bodies that emanated from their church building were essential to the liturgy. When theatrical activity interfered with, interrupted, or overshadowed ceremonial

\textsuperscript{63} Doncourt, \textit{Remarques historiques, sur l’Eglise et la paroisse de S. Sulpice}, 1:14, 156.
\textsuperscript{64} Henri Malbois, author of an unpublished history of Saint-Sulpice’s church building, cites an arrêt de Parlement, or legal document, drafted in 1722, the year before the new nave’s completion. The document’s author explains, “Against the chancel, but obliquely to it, because the orientation is different, is sutured the old nave. The floor of it has been raised by vaulting. See “Histoire de l’Eglise Saint-Sulpice,” Unpublished book manuscript (Paris, Twentieth century), f. 3, Ch. 1, Non-catalogued manuscript, SS: (“Sur le chœur, obliquement à lui, car l’orientation est différente, se soude l’ancienne nef. Le sol en a été exhaussé par des voûtes”).
\textsuperscript{65} Certeau, \textit{The Practice of Everyday Life}, xviii.
emanations, priests grew angry. Such interferences precipitated clerical recourse to sacramental refusal.

The ceremonial emanations that mattered tactically to priests fell into two categories. Priests assimilated auditory overflow of tactical value to bells, and intentional ambulatory overflow to procession. The ringing of church bells engulfed the auditory space around the church, summoning people to services, announcing, among other things, the moment in which the priest consecrated the Eucharist, and signaling the need to mourn the dead. Priests, like Olier, believed the sound of the church bells to be more than just a signal. In their view, the Holy Spirit operated through the peal of the bells. In his treatise on the ceremonies of the mass, Olier wrote:

> At times the Bells excite us to the joy of the Mysteries we honor, and one feels in the depths of the soul effects that the senses and sensible things would not know how to produce, like respect, love, jubilation, annihilation and light for all the holy Mysteries, which are the effects of nothing other than the Holy Spirit operating underneath things that are sensible and rude.  

Bell-ringing extended religious sentiment and the Holy Spirit’s touch to the entire region within earshot. Olier expressed the bells’ essential liturgical function by comparing them first to the sacraments, and then to a priest’s voice. He asserted that the Holy Spirit’s operation in the bells corresponded to the divine presence in the sacraments, passing through the bells’ sounds “just like in proportion he operates our salvation through (sous) the water and oil of the Sacraments.”  

Next, Olier proposed that the Holy Spirit worked through the bells “as through words, which are of the nature of the sound of the bells and which explain more distinctly that which they express, although with less noise. This likeness,” continue Olier, “makes the bells serve as a supplement to the Priest, to excite the people to their duty.”  

Bells linked, by a series of associations, the permeable and exterior aspects of the church building back to the objects and agents with the greatest capacity to transform spaces into places: the sacramental elements and the priest’s teaching. At the same time, the tolling of the bells enacted in auditory space the tactical dominance priests asserted over the liminal zones around the church walls.

In the same way that bell-ringing, from a clerical perspective, extended the water, oil, and words used by priests at the altar out into parish air, processions extended the altar space and the Eucharist’s presence to all the surrounding streets. Beuvelet defined a procession as “a holy and Religious Ceremony in which the Clergy and the assembled people march with order and pomp (appareil) from one place to another, offering to God their vows and their prayers.”  

A procession preceded every parish mass, marked each feast day, and encircled the consecrated Eucharist anytime it was carried to the sick or dying. From an ecclesiastical perspective, the

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66 Olier, *Explication des cérémonies de la grande messe de paroisse*, 9–10: (“Par fois les Cloches nous excitent à la joye des Mysteres qu’on honor, & on ressent dans le fond de l’ame des effets que les sens & les choses sensibles ne scauroient produire, comme respect, amour, jubilation, aneantissement & lumiere pour tous ces saints Mysteres, qui sont les effets seulement du Saint Esprit operant sous des choses sensibles & grossieres”).


68 Olier, *Explication des cérémonies de la grande messe de paroisse*, 10: (“mesmes sous des paroles qui sont de la nature du son des cloches, & qui expliquent plus distinctement ce qu’elles expriment, quoy qu’avec moins de bruit. Cette ressemblance fait que les cloches servent de supplément au Prestre, pour exciter les peuples à leur devoir”).

Church could not mark the liturgical calendar properly without processions. The bodies of clergymen and parishioners walking ceremonially together through the streets represented God’s presence permeating the world. A mid-seventeenth-century pamphlet titled “Instruction familiere des processions de l’eglise” (Familiar Instruction on church processions) explained that processions

make us see that God is the principle and end of all things, who going out … of himself through the production of his creatures, returns to himself when, in making them, he destines them for his glory.  

Each procession commemorated some aspect of the Christian narrative, redoubling through footsteps in the church’s liminal zones the significations assigned to that day’s sacramental celebration at the altar. The weekly Sunday procession around the church building, for example, honored Christ’s resurrection, the Easter procession recalled his apparitions, and the Corpus Christi procession commemorated his crucifixion. Processions presented the work of the altar in alternative form.

Tactically, processions proved an extremely effective way to shore up “local authority.” The processional form seized a primary feature of habitable space – its openness to comings and goings, its resistance to closing in upon itself, and its preference for ground-level movement rather than bird’s-eye perspective – and positioned priests as the agents of habitability who coordinated entrances and exits. The processional form thus recruited a heterogeneous population into performing community in a way that acknowledged priests as the tactically dominant party. Processions appropriated habitable space’s openness to coming and going by doing exactly that, but in an ordered way. As the definitions of a procession given by the above pamphlet and by a Ritual from the diocese of Alet note, a procession involved not just walking from one holy site to another, but, very importantly for a provisional consolidation of the church building as a “place,” returning to the site from which the procession started. The pamphlet explains that in a procession the clergy and the assembled people “march with order from one holy place to another, to return in the same order to the same place from which they had left.”

The Ritual of Alet, too, states that a procession leaves from a holy site “so as to return to it singing public prayers.” By returning to the point of departure, processions turned what had been a permeable site when the event commenced into a final destination, and by extension at least temporarily into a localization, a place with strategic potential.

This processional return to the church building bolstered priestly identity. The Ritual of Alet adds two comments about the going out and coming in accomplished by a procession, explaining this pattern in terms of priestly dominance. “Why in the procession do the faithful go

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70 “Instruction familiere des processions de l’eglise,” in *Recueil des divers traitez concernant l’office des prestres, ouvrage grandement utile à ceu qui veut s’acquitter dignement de leur devoir* (Paris: Chez Pierre Trichard, rue saint Victor, proche saint Nicolas du Chardonnet, [1650s]), 2–3: (“Elles nous fait voir que Dieu est le prince & la fin de toutes choses, lequel sortant … hors de soy-mesme par la production des creatures, retourne en soy-mesme, quand en les produissant, il les destine à sa gloire”).

71 See Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 189–192; See also “Instruction familiere des processions de l’eglise,” 3–5.


and return together, and in the company of their pastor?” the Ritual asks. The Ritual continues, “Why in processions do the people follow the Priests and the clergy?” replying: “To teach them the obligation they have to comport themselves according to the instructions and the good example of Churchmen, and particularly of their pastor...” The orderly return to the church building positioned and performed the priest as its chief. To interrupt, impede, or ignore a procession consequently constituted a direct attack – whether the perpetrator intended it so or not – on priestly authority.

The procession’s tactical efficacy also derived from the way people who witnessed a procession were expected to respond. Procession participants carried sacramental objects, like the cross, a relic, or a consecrated host. Ceremonial protocol required that those who saw an ecclesiastical procession pass by, and especially a procession that involved a consecrated wafer, acknowledge its passing with reverence. Given that priests carried a consecrated wafer – which they referred to as the Blessed Sacrament – in procession every time they administered communion to sick and dying parishioners, the rites surrounding death held tremendous tactical value. A tract titled “La journée chrétienne” (The Christian day) urged Catholics: “When you encounter the Blessed Sacrament in the streets, which is being carried to some sick person, put yourself on your knees and say, ‘I adore you, my Lord Jesus-Christ…’” Seminaries taught priests to enforce ceremonial participation among parishioners along a procession’s path. In a chapter on how to deliver communion to the sick, Beuvelet instructs the priest who will administer communion that “All along his route, he must take care to make those who are in the street kneel, if the Cleric [who accompanies the priest] does not do it...” By enforcing ceremonial participation on the part of even the most accidental of procession spectators, churchmen appropriated the spaces through which they walked. Although each appropriative gesture – each instance in which a priest pointed to a person on the street and reminded them to genuflect – did not transform that spot into a “place,” this appropriative process demanded that parishioners enact a hierarchical relation, a relation that operated by affiliation and accretion in order to step by step reinforce the church building’s strategic aspect: the parishioner bows to the Blessed Sacrament, which is held by the priest, who is accompanied by clergymen, who carry

74 Pavillon, Les Instructions du rituel du diocese d’Alet, 622: (“Pourquoy dans la procession les fidelles vont-ils, & retournent-ils ensemble, & en la compagnie de leur pasteur?”).
75 Pavillon, Les Instructions du rituel du diocese d’Alet, 622: (“Pour nous apprendre qu’un chrestien doit vivre & mourir dans la foy & la communion de l’Eglise, & sous la conduite de son pasteur”).
76 Pavillon, Les Instructions du rituel du diocese d’Alet, 622: (“Pourquoy dans les processions le peuple suit-il les Prestres, & le clergé? Pour luy apprendre l’obligation qu’il a de se conduire par les instructions, & par les bons exemples des Ecclesiastiques, & particulierement de son pasteur…”).
77 The rest of the prayer parishioners were supposed to say when the kneel as the procession passed was as follows: “I thank you for the mercy that made you institute this divine Sacrament, in which I firmly believe that you are true God and true Man; show grace to this poor soul that you are going to visit, that [he/she] receives you fittingly.” See “La Journée chrétienne,” 2: (“Quand vous rencontrerez le S. Sacrement par les ruës, lequel on porte à quelque malade, vous vous mettrez à genoux, & direz: Je vous adore, mon Seigneur Jesus-Christ, je vous remercie de la charité qui vous a fait instituer ce divin Sacrement, auquel je crois fermement que vous estes vray Dieu & vray Homme; faites la grace à cette pauvre ame que vous allez visiter, de vous recevoir dignement”). Like the other pamphlets cited in this chapter, this tract is bound in a collection of short publications assembled in the mid-seventeenth century. It does not have a publication date, but based on the dated pamphlets in the collection it was probably printed in the late 1650s.
78 Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 230–231: (“Le long du chemin, il prend garde de faire mettre à genoux ceux qui sont dans la ruë, si le Clerc ne le fait…”).
other sacramental objects, all of which received their sacramental qualities at the altar located in the parish church.79 Processional ceremonies enabled a conversion of tactical action into strategic fortification.

Parish priests worried that the auditory and ambulatory overflow from nearby theaters compromised the liturgy’s sonorous and embodied emanations. They believed that theater-related sounds detracted from service-related sounds like bells and preaching. Although the documents surviving from Saint-Sulpice do not record exactly how the Sulpicians articulated their discontent with theater noise, their concerns can be deduced from clerical complaints in other parishes where theaters neighbored churches, like parish of Saint-Eustache, and from the reasons priests listed when trying to prevent theater troupes from entering their parishes. Sulpician clergymen quite likely lodged similar complaints against the performers from the Foire, and later against the actors from Molière’s former troupe. In such situations, churchmen typically fretted about two kinds of auditory overflow from theaters, sounds created by advertisements and sounds created by the shows themselves.

A sixteenth-century anecdote from the parish of Saint-Eustache depicts the kind of sonic scenario priests continued to dread in the seventeenth century. In the anecdote, a head-to-head confrontation between a priest and an actor begins as a competition for sonic space and the audience auditory dominance enabled a person to recruit or retain. To announce new plays, theater troupes in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries employed criers who walked through the city loudly stating information about an upcoming performance.80 The central squares in front of churches, and the great numbers of people from all social stations who gathered in or passed through the square before and after services, made churches good places for criers to cry. The Parfaict brothers, in their history of French theater, write that around the year 1510 an author-actor-producer of Mystery plays named Jean du Pont-Alais had developed a new show.81 To draw a crowd, he decided to beat his tambourine at the intersection near the Church of Saint-Eustache, calling out the show’s details during the parish priest’s prône, or homily. Pont-Alais’s tambourine interrupted the curé mid-sermon. According to the Parfaict brothers, “seeing his auditors leave the Church in hordes to go listen to Pont-Alais,” the parish priest marched out into the street to confront the actor.82 The statement attributed to the priest by the anecdote conveys the idea that the clergy thought their liturgical activities invested them with auditory dominion over the sonic space around the church. The parish priest demanded, “Who

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79 I borrow the notions of appropriation and relation from de Certeau’s subsection about “Pedestrian speech acts” in his much-cited chapter on “Walking in the City.” See The Practice of Everyday Life, 97–99.
80 See Wiley, The Early Public Theatre in France, 218–219: The use of criers seems to have given way to more sophisticated publicity techniques by the mid-seventeenth century. Mélèse does not mention criers in his discussion about theater advertising under Louis XIV. Instead, troupes used “nouvellistes,” or reporters, who transmitted information by circulating among as many assemblies as possible, and through posters and private readings of plays. See Mélèse, Le Théâtre et le public à paris sous Louis XIV, 1659-1715, 234–240.
82 Parfaict and Parfaict, Histoire du Théâtre François, depuis son origine jusqu’à présent, avec la vie des plus célèbres poètes dramatiques, un catalogue exact de leurs pièces, & des notes historiques et critiques, 2:256: (“Le Curé ... voyant ses Auditeurs sortir en foule de l’Eglise pour aller entendre Pont-Alais, descendit de sa Chaire, se rendit dans le Carrefour”).
made you so bold … as to tambourine while I preach?” Pont-Alais’s reply, flipped the question back to the curé, demanding “And who made you so bold as to preach while I tambourine?” At first glance the Pont-Alais’ offense seems to be that he steals the curé’s audience. The greater threat, however, had to do with displacement. Not only do the parishioners in the anecdote leave the church mid-service – highlighting the church’s permeability as a building, as an event, and as an institution – but the priest, too, leaves his “place.” He descends from his pulpit and takes to the intersection. Whether true or not, the anecdote is memorable because it shows how, despite appearances, the priest’s command of the pulpit did not in fact provide him with a place from which he could “secure independence with respect to circumstances,” in this case theatrical circumstances. By making noise, an entertainer revealed the priest’s voice as a tactical emanation rather than a strategic operation.

Contestations between priests and actors over sonic space in the seventeenth century continued to deal a double blow to ecclesiastical authority, signaling at once the church building’s porousness and the parish priest’s inability to keep his parishioners in their seats. In an oft-quoted letter from Racine to Boileau regarding the difficulty encountered by the troupe from the Comédie-Française when they had to leave their theater in 1687, Racine lists auditor interference as the reason given by parish priests who were trying to keep the actors from settling near their churches:

> They have already tried to buy places in five or six locations; but everywhere they go it’s a wonder to hear how the parish priests protest. The parish priest of Saint-Germain-de-l’Auxerrois already ensured that they will not be at the Hôtel de Sourdis because from their theater one would have plainly heard the organs, and from the church one would have perfectly heard the violins.

While the parish priest from Saint-Germain-de-l’Auxerrois no doubt exaggerated the auditory overlap between his church and the potential theater site, his excuse for chasing away the actors nonetheless reveals the porous sonic boundaries that characterized theatrical and religious events in the seventeenth century.

Although the parish priest of the Church of Saint-Sulpice likely echoed in his objections to the nearby Foire and Théâtre Guénégaud the kinds of complaints made by his fellow curés about theater noise disrupting religious services, Saint-Sulpice’s clergy were primarily concerned about ambulatory overflow, both from seasonal performers and the Comédie-Française. Theater crowds impeded processions. During the decade prior to Barmondière’s decision in 1685 to demand a renunciation from Brécourt before burying him, the priests at Saint-Sulpice believed that theatrical enterprises were encroaching upon their ceremonial territory. If the priests of Saint-Sulpice had succeed in clearing a theater-free path for God’s Eucharistic body and the priests who carried it in procession, the tactical advantages they could obtain by demanding a

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83 Parfaict and Parfaict, *Histoire du Théâtre François, depuis son origine jusqu’à présent, avec la vie des plus célèbres poètes dramatiques, un catalogue exact de leurs pièces, & des notes historiques et critiques*, 2:256: (“Qui vous a fait si hardi … de tabouriner pendant que je prêche?” “Et qui vous a fait si hardi de prêcher pendant que je tabourine?”).


85 Cited by Maugras, *Les Comédiens hors la loi*, 154: (“Ils ont déjà marchandé des places dans cinq ou six endroits; mais partout où ils vont, c’est merveille d’entendre comme les curés crient. Le curé de Saint-Germain-de-l’Auxerrois a déjà obtenu qu’ils ne seraient point à l’hôtel de Sourdis, parce que de leur théâtre on aurait entendu tout à plein les orgues, et de l’église on aurait parfaitement entendu les violons”).
renunciation of the stage from dying actors might have proved less important. However, the priests of Saint-Sulpice failed to secure a theater-free zone around the church building, a failure that announced the underlying frailty that plagued the Church’s tactical authority. Priests in the parish of Saint-Sulpice leveraged the threat of sacramental exclusion more aggressively during the closing years of the seventeenth century to repair the damage done to their strategic aspiration.

Performers from the Foire Saint-Germain posed the initial threat to parish processions. According to Simon de Doncourt, one of the parish of Saint-Sulpice’s earliest historians, in 1678 a group of entertainers took up residence during the Foire Saint-Germain on the Rue des Quatre-Vents, a street behind the church. Doncourt describes them as “marionette puppeteers, tightrope dancers, and other wandering entertainers (baladins).” The troupe was probably that headed by a Frenchman named Charles Allard and a German named Maurice Vonderbeck. According to Albert, their troupe consisted of twenty-four entertainers who “had earned admiration first for their dances and acrobatics, their Italian postures, their tricks, their vaulting, and their dangerous balancing acts.” At some point prior to the festival season of 1678, Allard and Vonderbeck’s troupe had introduced an innovation. They had started to “frame their exercises in little scenes with dialogue, which served as introduction and commentary for their acrobatics and dancing.” Their entertainments also made use of theatrical costumes. Jal notes that Vonderbeck dressed as Scaramouche and that his brother played Arlequin. Prohibited by Foire regulations from setting up their performance equipment inside the fairgrounds, where only merchants were allowed to erect stalls, the entertainers in question conducted their performances on temporary stages along the street. According to Doncourt, “this street was the one in the entire suburb (faubourg) where the very great Blessed Sacrement passed the most often when carried to the sick.” In other words, the priests of Saint-Sulpice processed along the Rue des Quatre-Vents numerous times each week when administering the sacraments to parishioners who were not able to physically come to the church. To them, the Rue des Quatre-Vents had great tactical importance.

In the 1640s and 1650s, the first generation of Sulpician priests would have handled such a situation tactically, countering theatrical entertainments with a proliferation of ceremonies intended to out-compete worldly diversions through liturgical splendor. The use of ceremonies as a means of tactical competition reflected the clergy’s still nascent professional stature: they could

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88 I use the spelling given by Jal in *Dictionnaire critique de biographie et d’histoire*, 164. Vonderbeck’s name on the archival documents consulted by Jal was spelled Moritz Von Der Beck.
89 It does not seem that Allard and Vonderbeck’s troupe had marionette players. Doncourt might be confusing two troupes, and quite possibly blurring together several distinct incidents. According to Albert, a marionette player named Alexandre Bertrand erected a theater in the Rue des Quatre-Vents in 1689. See Albert, *Les Théâtres de la Foire (1660-1789)*, 5–6, 7: (“[ils] s’étaient fait admirer d’abord par leurs danses et leurs sauts, leurs postures à l’italienne, leurs tours, leurs voltiges et leurs équilibrés péripleux”).
91 Jal, *Dictionnaire critique de biographie et d’histoire*, 164.
not push entertainers out of the parish and had to instead wage a ground-level campaign using a medium similar to that which posed a threat, fighting spectacle with spectacle. In some instances, the tactical contest over parish space pitted a priest against an entertainer in one-to-one ceremonial sparring. Joseph Grandet, who was a seminarian at the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice from 1671-1673, recounts an anecdote depicting this kind of encounter:

Monsieur Olier visited frequently the cantons of the parish. One day as he passed a public square, he saw a great multitude of people assembled around a charlatan who was entertaining the masses. Then, realizing a little-used method, he began to preach (catéchiser) from the other side of the street and very soon he had more auditors than the clown who, finally, seeing that he had been abandoned, came to listen to him like the others and converted.  

The anecdote cannot be verified and thus cannot be treated as a fact, but must have resonated with the second generation of Sulpicians who, in 1673 – the year Grandet left the seminary – suddenly found themselves neighbors not only of street performers like the one in the anecdote, but also of some of Paris’ best professional actors. In the anecdote, Olier has no strategic advantage; he has no “base” from which he can “secure independence with respect to circumstances.” Rather, he seizes an improvisational opportunity, insinuates himself into the provisional place claimed by the entertainer and, using the same materials as the clown – a street corner and a solo performance – manipulates circumstances on the fly in a way that turns them to his advantage, refiguring the crowd into a devout assembly. However, Olier cannot “keep” what he has won. The clown could return to the street corner the next day. Furthermore, by competing with the clown Olier equated preaching to street performance, potentially eroding preaching’s special status as a ceremonial medium on par with church bells. Only the anecdote’s claim that the performer converted provides the priest’s tactical victory with a feeble guarantee.

The tactical use of ceremonies to counteract entertainments more often, during the first generation of seminary foundation, countered theatrical activity by multiplying the number of liturgical events taking place in and around the church building. Although still tactical in nature, ceremonies that made use of the church building had the potential, through accretion, to consolidate the building’s function as a strategic base. Thus, whenever and wherever entertainments diverted parishioners, Olier sought to “occupy” them with liturgical action. The Vie written about Olier by his immediate successor, Alexandre le Ragois de Bretonvilliers,

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93 According to Letourneau, two versions of Grandet’s manuscript exist, an older one conserved at the Seminary of Angers and a slightly more recent version conserved at the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice. The Saint-Sulpice version contains corrections made by Grandet. Letourneau considers the Saint-Sulpice copy the better one, and thinks that Grandet had this second version made in approximately 1720, several years before his death. Grandet lived from 1646-1724. Grandet, Les Saints prêtres français du XVIIe siècle, ouvrage publié pour la première fois, d’après le manuscrit original, 2:287, regarding the manuscript see vii–viii: (“Mr. Olier visitait souvent les cantons de la paroisse. Un jour qu’il passait par une place publique, il vit une grande multitude de monde assemblée autour d’un charlatan qui divertissait la populace. Alors, s’avisant d’un moyen assez peu usité, il se mit à catéchiser de l’autre côté de la rue et eut bientôt plus d’auditeurs que le bouffon qui, à la fin, se voyant abandonné, vint l’écouter comme les autres et se convertit”); The anecdote in the manuscript version can be found in Joseph Grandet, “Vies de q.q. [quelques] prêtres de ces derniers siècles, [volume] I” (Paris, 1720), f. 135, Ms. 521, SS. Before modification, the anecdote reads: “M. Olier visitoit souvent les Cantons de sa paroisse, un jour qu’il passoit par une place, il vit une grande multitude de peuple assemblé autour d’un bouffon qui divertissoit la populace, s’il ne faisait quelque chose de pis, alors s’avisant d’un moyen assez peu usité, il se mit a Cateschiser de l’autre coste et eut bientost plus d’auditeurs que le boufon, qui a la fin se voyant seul, vint l’ecouter comme les autres & se convertit” (135).
94 Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, xviii.
figures Olier’s ceremonial proliferation as a concentrated response to Mardi Gras entertainments. “Our servant of the Lord,” writes Bretonvilliers, “worked to find proper and effective ways to occupy his flock on feast days in service of the Lord, so as to turn them away from the debauchery where laziness and idleness normally carry them,” continuing:

for this reason he established the prayers of forty hours the three days of Carnival, with the Great Mass of the very blessed Sacrament, Sermon, solemn Vespers, Procession and Greeting of the Blessed Sacrament. He strongly exhorted his flock to confess and to receive communion so as to oppose the debauchery of the time, to work to render unto God by his son Jesus-Christ as much glory and praise as the world took from him through infamous debauchery. He established the same devotions the day of the Kings and of Saint Martin, which one customarily passes in diversions and feasting…

As Bretonvillier’s list shows, Olier created a full calendar of liturgical events scheduled at the same times entertainments at the Foire Saint-Germain would otherwise attract parishioners. An annual pamphlet called the *Spiritual Almanac* confirms the density of liturgical events offered at Saint-Sulpice by the end of Olier’s life. According to Bretonvilliers, these ceremonies succeeded in drawing parishioners away from entertainments. He claims that Olier’s liturgical endeavors enjoyed “such great benediction on the part of God that the Greetings [of the Blessed Sacrament] on these feasts the church is ordinarily full…” If large numbers of people really did attend the services that competed with fairground entertainments, the ceremonies that unfolded within the church building – like the high masses, sermons, expositions of the consecrated Eucharist, and vespers – performed the church’s place-ness by figuring it as a privileged site of assembly, while the processions that preceded and concluded these ceremonies served to differentiate the permeability of the fairgrounds from the permeability of church grounds.

95 Doncourt published the Life written by Bretonvilliers. The section I cite here is from the first volume of Bretonvillier’s manuscript, which I have not yet consulted. I have only consulted the second volume. See Simon de Doncourt, *Remarques historiques sur l’église et la paroisse de Saint Sulpice: Pièces justificatives*, vol. 3 (Paris: Chez Nicolas Crapart, Libraire, rue de Vaugirard, près de la place S. Michel, 1773), 631: (“Notre serviteur de Dieu tâchoit encore de trouver les moyens propres & capables, afin d’occuper ses ouailles les jours de Fêtes dans le service de Dieu, afin de les détourner des débauches où les porte ordinairement la fainéantise & l’oisiveté: pour cette raison il établit les prieres de quarante heures, les trois jours de Carnaval, avec la grand’Messe du très-saint Sacrement, Sermon, Vêpres solennelle, Procession & Salut du très-saint Sacrement. Il exhorta fortement ses ouailles à se confesser & communier pour s’opposer aux débauches du tems, pour tâcher de rendre à Dieu par son fils Jesus-Christ, autant de gloire & de louange que le monde lui en ôtoit par les infâmes débauches. Il établit les mêmes dévotions le jour des Rois & de S. Martin, lesquels on a de coutume de passer en divertissements & en festins…”).


Barmondière had assumed the office of parish priest in November of the same year the seasonal performers moved into the Rue des Quatre-Vents. When Barmondière confronted the entertainers on the Rue des Quatre-Vents, he did not mount a ceremonial campaign, like his predecessor. Several factors explain why a ceremonial response no longer presented itself as the obvious solution. First, the church of Saint-Sulpice had maintained a dense liturgical calendar ever since Olier’s tenure. Augmenting the number of ceremonies still further would not have resulted in a significant tactical victory. Second, the haphazard material condition create by the church building’s halted construction detracted from ceremonial splendor, reducing still further the appeal of a liturgical response to theatrical entertainments. Third, despite their building’s half-built state, the priests of Saint-Sulpice had made professional and institutional gains since the 1640s. Among other things, their liturgical prodigiosity and ceremonial expertise combined with their rapid expansion of seminary foundations in the provinces, their ability to establish continuity from one generation to the next, and their success in placing former students in positions of ecclesiastical power had cemented a degree of institutional recognition. The first generation’s tactical use of ceremonies had accrued, gradually creating strategic advantages. In spatial contestations, the priests of Saint-Sulpice during the closing decades of the seventeenth century no longer relied to the same extent on ceremonial ingenuity as Olier had in order to express their local authority.

Accordingly, when entertainers attempted to settle in the streets around the church in 1678, the priests of Saint-Sulpice responded first by trying to demonstrate their own strategic position by garnering support from parties with even greater strategic advantages, like the police and the king, who had weapons and laws on their side. In their spatial contestations with the seasonal performers, the priests prevailed – or so it seemed at first – by reinforcing their nascent local authority through alliances with these other, more powerful regimes. Barmondière filed a complaint with the Lieutenant of Police, Monsieur de la Reynie, requesting that the police prohibit the performers from living on the Rue des Quatre-Vents and that any property owner who rented to them receive a fine of 500 livres and imprisonment. Barmondière also recruited the support of his parishioners, filing the complaint in collaboration with “the inhabitants of the quarter,” according to Doncourt. La Reynie obliged Barmondière at the beginning of 1681, 98 Saint-Sulpice inspired or supported many seminary endeavors outside Paris, either by lending priests or by circulating their house rules as a model. A short list of seminaries that borrowed from Saint-Sulpice in this way without ever coming fully under Sulpician leadership includes Limoges, Aix-en-Provence, Bazourges, Lodève, Saint-Flour, and Ville-Franche-de-Rouergue, as well as the Séminaire des Trente-Trois in Paris. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Superior General of Saint-Sulpice accepted responsibility for the following provincial seminaries: Nantes (1649), Viviers (1650), Le Puy (1652), Clermont (1653), Lyon (1660), Limoges (1666), Bourges (1679), Autun (1680), Angers (1695), Tulle (1697), Avignon (1705), Orléans (1707), Cambrai (1715), and Reims (1787). By the dawn of the French Revolution, Saint-Sulpice had founded two seminaries in the New World, one in Montréal (1657) and one in Baltimore (1791). See Boisard, La Compagnie de Saint Sulpice, 1:29–31, 38–43, 52–53, 58–61, 65–66, 225; Saint-Sulpice now runs seminaries on five continents. The Canadian Sulpicians oversee seminaries in Japan, Colombia, Brasil, Guatemala, Panamá, Argentina, Venezuela, Honduars, and the Congo, the French Sulpicians have a seminary in Vietnam, and the American Sulpicians support a seminary in Zambia. See the following websites: The Priests of Saint Sulpice of Montreal, “A Brief History: The Society of the Priests of Saint Sulpice in Canada”, March 2011, http://www.sulpc.org/hist_en.php; Séminaire de Saint Sulpice, “Implantation de la Compagnie de Saint-Sulpice”, 1998, http://semissy.pagesperso-orange.fr/pssimpl.htm#FRANCE.

and instructed the district’s commissioner to enforce the terms of the curé’s request. The marionette players, tightrope walkers, and other performers were thus forced to move. Barmondière continued to pursue them each time the performers attempted to live and work in the network of streets surrounding both the church building and the fairgrounds. The following winter, the performers rented houses and set up their stages in another nearby street, the Rue des Cordeliers. Barmondière and the neighbors renewed their request to Monsieur de la Reynie, which procured in January a parliamentary ruling (arrêt) that prohibited the actors from occupying buildings on the street in question. As before, property owners who failed to comply with the ruling risked a fine of 500 livres. By coordinating with the police, the priests of Saint-Sulpice not only protected their ceremonial territory, but asserted their claim to strategic rather than tactical authority in the parish. If the priests had used ceremonies to out-compete the seasonal performers, as Olier had in the 1640s, Saint-Sulpice’s clergymen would have had to insinuate themselves into the other’s place, as de Certeau says. Instead, able to convince the police to push performers out of the area surrounding the church without interacting directly with the entertainers, the priests demonstrated that they had enough power to isolate themselves from their environment, and simultaneously asserted the church building’s status as a strategic “place.”

This apparent victory for Barmondière and his collaborators, however, ended up aggravating the encroachment of theatrical activity on spaces that the priests considered ancillary to the church and its sacramental activities. In approximately 1683 – Doncourt does not give a precise date – the seasonal performers who Barmondière had chased from the Rue des Quatre-Vents and the Rue des Cordeliers at last obtained permission to conduct their entertainments inside the fairground walls, with the merchant stalls. Although this change promised to minimize spatial contests between priests and performers by installing the seasonal entertainers in a walled space off the streets through which priests processed, it in fact undermined the strategic victory the priests of Saint-Sulpice thought they had won. The new site in which the seasonal performers erected their stage revealed the church building’s permeability, making a mockery of the priests’ aspiration to possess the kind of strategic power facilitated by the possession of an enclosed place. One of the market walls shared a wall with the church’s cemetery. Once inside the Foire, the entertainers built their temporary stage against this wall, such that the cemetery wall served as a support for their make-shift theater space. Doncourt writes with indignation:

They raised there, against the wall of the cemetery, a theater hall, despite Monsieur the curé, who had done all that he could to oppose it, and despite the protestations of all those who are truly attached to religion. Indeed, how could it be that there are spectators in a place separated from the cemetery by only the slightest partition?

The stage’s proximity to the cemetery harkened back to the early seventeenth century, when parishioners habitually treated church ground as public lands, grazing their flocks, holding

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104 Doncourt, *Remarques historiques, sur l’Eglise et la paroisse de S. Sulpice*, 1:146: (“On y a élevé, contre le mur du cimetiere, une salle de Spectacle, malgré M. le Curé, qui a fait tout ce qui dépendoit de lui, pour s’y opposer, & malgré les réclamations de tous ceux qui sont vraiment attachés à la religion. Et en effet, comment peut-il y avoir des spectateurs dans un lieu qui n’est séparé du cimetiere que par une légère cloison?”).
markets, and putting on plays amidst the cemetery’s headstones. This mixing of the outside world with what had increasingly become one of the church’s enclosed spaces offended Doncourt, who exclaims,

[H]ow can they give themselves over without fright to criminal pleasures beside the cadavers of their brothers whom they will soon follow? [H]ow can one not think that many among them suffer and will suffer eternally in hell for having taken part in these fateful pleasures? [H]ow can one see without shedding tears of blood these assemblies of farce players and traveling entertainers steal from the true God his adorers, and defy his justice at the very door of his temple?\(^{105}\)

While Doncourt’s remarks double as a claim that theatrical entertainments constituted sin, his indignation derives from the way the fairground theater penetrated the church’s boundaries, reducing it from a place to a space.

Ten years later, when the actors from the Comédie-Française opened their new theater at L’Étoile – the remodeled tennis court near the church – they, too, occupied space along the procession path. In a complaint submitted to the king, Barmondière protested vigorously that the theater’s presence would interfere with parish processions. According to Doncourt, who summarizes Barmondière’s report (mémoire) to Louis XIV requesting that the king prohibit the actors from setting into their theater near Saint-Sulpice, Barmondière gave the following reasons:

1. [T]hat the honor of our Jesus Christ is very particularly concerned because every year we make in this place a magnificent monstrance altar, like a triumphant arch erected to the glory of the Savior, who is carried to it solemnly in procession…
2. That this place is little removed from the church of Saint-Sulpice, and is where the Priests are obliged to pass several times per day to visit the sick, administer the sacraments to them, conduct burial processions (convois), to which the crowd of carriages, coaches, lackeys, etc. would be a great obstacle in a heavily populated and narrow space.\(^{106}\)

Barmondière considered the prospect of the Comédie-Française’s return to the parish so dire that he even tried to buy L’Étoile from the actors, offering them 5,000 livres of his own money, a

\(^{105}\) Doncourt, *Remarques historiques, sur l’Eglise et la paroisse de S. Sulpice*, 1:146–147: (“comment s’y livrer sans frayeur, à des plaisirs criminels à côté des cadavres de ses freres que l’on suivra bientôt? comment ne pas penser que plusieurs d’entre eux souffrent & souffriront éternellement dans les enfers, pour avoir pris part à ces funestes plaisirs? comment voir sans verser des larmes de sang, ces assemblées de farceurs & baladins enlever au vrai Dieu ses adorateurs & baladins enlever au vrai Dieu ses adorateurs, & braver à la porte même de son temple sa redoutables justice?”).

\(^{106}\) I think there is a possibility that Barmondière’s request to the king is conserved at the Archives nationales. I have started researching the path such a document would have taken through the seventeenth-century court system so as to determine where in the archives to look for it, but have not yet located it, nor have I come across a copy of the mémoire in the cartons at the Archives nationales that contain papers from the church and seminary of Saint-Sulpice. For now, I rely on Doncourt’s summary of the document in *Remarques historiques, sur l’Eglise et la paroisse de S. Sulpice*, 1:149: (“1) que l’honneur de J.C. y étoit très-particulièrement intéressé; que tous les ans on faisoit dans ce lieu un magnifique Reposoir, comme un arc triomphant érigé à la gloire du Sauveur, qui y étoit porté solemnellement en procession... 2) Que ce lieu étoit peu éloigné de l’Eglise St. Sulpice, & où les Prêtres sont obligés de passer plusieurs fois par jour pour visiter les malades, leur administrer les Sacremens, faire les Convois, à quoi la foule des carrosses, cochers, laquais, &c. seroit un grand obstacle dans un lieu peuplé & resserré”).
price that Doncourt claims exceeded the land’s value.\textsuperscript{107} Neither Barmondière’s plea to the king nor his attempt to purchase the land obtained the desired results. The actors from the Comédie-Française continued building their new theater hall. Barmondière’s strategic alliances and financial resources failed him, and the priests of Saint-Sulpice found themselves reduced to tactical alternatives for protecting their authority over parish space.

Normal processions, however, could not tactically overpower the auditory and ambulatory overflow generated by the Comédie-Française’s performances at L’Étoile. In order to effectively appropriate parish spaces, enfolding them into the church building’s extended circumference, processions required active participation on the part of those who saw priests marching two by two through the street with the Blessed Sacrament in hand. Theater crowds thus presented a double challenge to priestly authority. First, the traffic created before and after plays made the act of procession difficult. Priests had to fight their way through bodies and vehicles, which did not bolster their efforts to carry themselves with dignity. Doncourt demanded,

\begin{quotation}
Is it not shameful that Christians block access to the Church by the inconvenience of their carriages, which occupy all the avenues? Is it not scandalous that we cannot carry the Holy Viaticum to the sick without the greatest difficulty due to the multitude of vehicles that encircle the Church and occupy the streets where we need to pass?\textsuperscript{108}
\end{quotation}

Second, people hurrying to the theater or waiting outside its doors did not form a particularly responsive gathering of witnesses for a procession, especially if – as in the case of the acrobatic and marionette troupes before their introduction inside the fairground walls – the assembled spectators were actually watching an outdoor performance as the priests passed by in procession. The failure to bow and pray in response to processions might be one reason priests described spectator behavior as “disordered,” as a “mass of faithless people, crooks and other villains, who gather together and cause [with the entertainers] great chaos.”\textsuperscript{109} Theater spectators, albeit in most cases inadvertently, diminished the Church’s authority and enfeebled the social and religious preeminence of priests by not paying enough attention to their ambulatory ceremonies.

Even when actors tried to appease priests, as the actors from the Comédie-Française did upon moving into their new theater, the chaos wreaked upon processions by theatergoers outweighed any devotional fervor demonstrated by individual actors or by the troupe as a whole. According to Maugras, for the first decade or more of the troupe’s tenure at L’Étoile, they in fact donated a monstrance and other ornaments for the altar to which the priests of Saint-Sulpice processed each year when celebrating Corpus Christi. “Until the first years of the eighteenth century,” writes Maugras, “the parish of Saint-Sulpice’s procession of the Blessed Sacrament passed along the rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain, in front of the door of the Comédie[[-Française],

\textsuperscript{107} Doncourt, \textit{Remarques historiques, sur l’Église et la paroisse de S. Sulpile}, 1:149–150; Mélèse confirms Barmondière’s attempt to buy the theater. See \textit{Le Théâtre et le public à paris sous Louis XIV}, 1659-1715, 50. He cites a document that, when he conducted his research, was conserved at the Archives de la Fabrique de St-Sulpice in the 2nd section, § 9, 1st folder. The parish no longer has its own archives and the diocesan archives conserve very few documents from the Ancien Régime. This document probably now resides at the National Archives, although I have not yet been able to locate it in the cartons and notebooks I have consulted.

\textsuperscript{108} Doncourt, \textit{Remarques historiques, sur l’Église et la paroisse de S. Sulpile}, 1:147: (“[N]’est-il pas honteux que des Chrétiens défendent l’accès de l’Église par l’embarras de leurs équipages, qui en occupent toutes les avenues? n’est-il pas scandaleux qu’on ne puisse qu’avec la plus grande peine porter le S. Viatique aux malades, par la multitude des voitures qui entourent l’Église & occupent les rues où il faut nécessairement passer?”).

where there was a monstrance paid for at the expense of the troupe (société) and, on the altar, a silver gift that valued approximately 3,000 francs.” Indeed, regardless of the actors’ attempts at processional participation, their theater significantly wounded the priests’ tactical appropriation of the rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain. The Sulpicians renounced their procession pathway. Doncourt writes, “Since that time, we no longer put the Monstrance or conduct the Corpus-Christi procession, nor any other, in that street.” He continues:

We also do things in such a way so as to never pass by there [the Comédie-Française] when carrying the Blessed Sacrament or Extreme Unction to the sick, nor when we do funeral processions and burials, unless the sick or deceased person lives on that street, in which case we go to the house of the sick or deceased by the shortest possible route, and we do not cross the street, but retrace our steps and return the way we came.

The local authority and spatial extension created by the priests of Saint-Sulpice along the rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain through annual processions and processions for the dead receded from around the Comédie-Française’s building. The priests’ tactical territory shrunk. In the ceremonial vacuum left when they abandoned what had been their prized processional route, France’s premier theater hall suddenly enjoyed the privileges associated with place. The clergy, its foes, scuttled back and forth in its shadow.

**Stage Renunciations and Sacramental Reabsorption**

In a period when the strategic pretensions of the priests of Saint-Sulpice had received a series of harsh blows – on one side seasonal performers had built their theater against the cemetery wall while on the other the Comédie-Française had erected a theater along the church’s most important procession route, the king had left them to their own devices, money could not buy relief, and Catholics from all over the city flocked to attend entertainments despite the imposition caused for liturgical ceremonies – an actor’s illness and death presented a valuable opportunity to save tactical face. Three sacraments, received as close as possible to a person’s last days, prepared the Catholic for death: Penance, the Viaticum – or last communion – and Extreme Unction, in which the priest anointed parts of the body representing the five senses so as to remove any residual sin that the penitent might have forgotten to confess. These rites, as Barmondière would have administered them to Brécourt in 1685, show how a priest could turn an actor’s malady into a processional take-back of lost territorial dominion by demanding that an actor renounce the stage before receiving the sacraments.

Although aside from the renunciation text there are no other surviving documents – like anecdotes or eye witness accounts – that describe the interactions between Brécourt and Barmondière as Brécourt received each final sacrament, Beuvelet’s compilation of Episcopal

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111 Doncourt, *Remarques historiques, sur l’Eglise et la paroisse de S. Sulpice*, 1:150: (“& depuis ce temps, on ne fait plus le Reposoir, & ni la procession de la Fête-Dieu, ni aucune autre ne passe plus dans cette rue”).

112 Doncourt, *Remarques historiques, sur l’Eglise et la paroisse de S. Sulpice*, 1:150: (“On fait aussi en sorte de ne jamais y [la Comédie-Française] passer lorsqu’on porte le St. Sacrement ou l’Extême-Onction aux malades & lorsqu’on fait les convois & sépultures, à moins que les malades ou les morts ne soient de cette rue, & pour lors on vient à la maison du malade ou du défunt, par le chemin le plus court, & on ne traverse point la rue, mais on s’en retourne sur ses pas”).
instructions from diocesan Rituals – a liturgical handbook called the *Instruction sur le manuel* – and a series of pamphlets on ecclesiastical discipline published near the Seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet in the mid-seventeenth century present the unfolding of events that Barmondière would have tried to follow. ¹¹³ These normative documents envision a sacramental sequence in which each rite increased the physical proximity between the priest’s body and the penitent, in which the ceremonial treatment of the penitent’s body identified him or her with consecrated objects, and in which the priest and penitent merge into one spiritual agent, reabsorbing the penitent into the liturgical community. Processions opened and closed each sacramental rite, spatializing the penitent’s body by remaking the penitent’s body and abode not as closed, self-contained sites but as permeable nodes in the network of ceremonial pathways that composed the church’s local authority. When the penitent happened to be an actor, the process of spatialization by means of which the sacraments reabsorbed the penitent served an additional function. By ceremonially decomposing the actor’s particular identity into an ensemble of generalized body parts, sacramental reabsorption symbolically enacted a ceremonial decomposition of the theater’s status as “place.”

The spatialization of an ailing person’s body and, in the case of an actor, the symbolic decomposition of the theater’s status as “place” can be discerned by analyzing the way the function of processions in the context of the last rites reorganized three key elements of theatrical play, namely, spectators, spectacles, and stages. The sacraments making up the last rites entailed at least four processions, a procession from the church to the person’s house to administer the Viaticum and Extreme Unction, followed by a procession from the house back to the church, and then, after the person’s death, a procession from the church to the house to gather the body, followed by a procession from the house back to the church. Depending on an ailing person’s relative health, the fact of illness and prospect of death could precipitate even more processions. If a sick person lived long enough to receive communion more than once before dying, each communion multiplied the number of processions by two.

Each procession from the church to an actor’s house eroded the theater’s status as place by symbolically, and in some cases literally, diverting a crowd of theatergoers toward liturgical ends. Before undertaking a procession to deliver the Viaticum or Extreme Unction, a priest tried to assemble as many participants as possible. Beuvelet’s *Instruction sur le manuel* instructs priests to “procure the most honor” for the sacrament “By the number of people present (assistants), that must be summoned by several bell tolls, which will serve as a signal to alert people to gather at the Church, each with a candle in hand.”¹¹⁴ The more people, the better. So as to maximize the number of attendees, the manual recommends that a priest “Giv[e] advice to the sick person’s relatives to invite all their neighbors to come to the Ceremony.”¹¹⁵ It further urges the priest to always conduct processions for the sick at the same time, thereby making it easier

¹¹³ Two similar collections of these pamphlets can be found at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, site Mitterrand (BNFM) under call number D.49744. It’s handwritten titles is “Recueil des divers traités concernant l’office des prestres, ouvrage grandement utile à ceu qui veut s’acquitter digement de leur devoir.” The second can be found at ASSSP under call number Rés P 18. It’s handwritten title is “Divers recueils pour les ecclesiastiques.” Each collection was gathered by a priest for his own use. The collection at ASSSP, for example, bears the inscription “N. Thomas de St. André prêtre, Curé de Gisors, 1664.”

¹¹⁴ Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 227–228: (“Comment peut-il procurer plus d’honneur à ce divin Sacrement? 1. Par le nombre d’assistans qu’il doit convoquer par quelques coups de cloche, qui servira de signal pour advertir de se rendre à l’Église, chacun un cierge à la main”).

¹¹⁵ Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 228: (“Donn[e] avis aux parens du malade, de prier le voisinage de se trouver à cette Ceremonie”).
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for parishioners to plan to attend. “And to facilitate even greater attendance (concours de peuple), strive to designate a certain hour for carrying the holy Communion to the sick, that is known by Parishioners and observe it inviolably unless the needs of the sick person demand otherwise…” writes Beuvelet.116 The optimal time from Beuvelet’s perspective was to schedule processions for the sick immediately at the end of a mass: “[F]or example,” he continues, “at the end of such and such a mass, at such and such an hour, we will give Communion to the sick, so that those who attended that Mass can at the end of it render this good service to Our Lord, and to their sick brother.”117 An actor’s family, neighbors, and friends formed an assembly that included many theater professionals.118 Given the importance that priests place on planning and publicizing processions in advance, the assembly that gathered to carry the Viaticum and Extreme Unction to an actor would also likely attract many admiring theatergoers as well. If the priests of Saint-Sulpice were right that their liturgical services drew parishioners away from other entertainments, then the crowd that gathered in the church for procession might even include people who had indeed chosen the church over a play that day. The procession that initiated the last rites therefore represented, in part, the church’s ability to wrest spectators away from the theater. Even if the procession did not in fact include performers or playgoers, the greater its size the greater the procession’s capacity to overwhelm any non-processional crowds the clergy might encounter on the way to the actor’s house.

Once underway, the procession to an actor’s house displayed the clergy’s ability to tame theater crowds by organizing the assembly of family, friends, neighbors, and parishioners – many of whom, if the priest were lucky, would be recognizable frequenters of the theater, either as players or spectators – into a liturgical body headed by the cross and oriented around the Blessed Sacrament. At the front of the procession marched a cleric – a clergyman who had not yet attained the priesthood and who could thus be a seminarian – accompanied by parishioners carrying torches.119 The cleric wore a surplice and rang a small bell as he walked, carrying a ceremonial purse that contained a corporal and purificator, or in layman’s terms a small, white table cloth to place under the chalice and a white, linen hand towel to wipe it before and after administering communion.120 If the priest was planning to administer both the Viaticum and Extreme Unction, the cleric also carried a small cross in his right hand and the Ritual under his left arm.121 Behind the torchbearers and cleric marched the priest, dressed in a surplice and a white or red stole with his head uncovered.122 Using both hands, he carried the Blessed

116 Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 228: (“Et pour faciliter encore plus de concours de peuple, tuscher d’assigner certaine heure pour porter la sainte Communion aux malades, qui soit connuë des Paroissiens & l’observer inviolablement, si la nécessité du malade n’exige pas le contraire”).
117 Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 228: (“[P]ar exemple, qu’à la fin de telle Messe qui se dit à telle heure, on Communiera les malades, afin que ceux qui auront assisté à cette Messe, puissent à l’issuë rendre ce bon office à Notre Seigneur, & a leur frere malade”).
118 See, for example, the many actors and musicians who participated in the various sacraments received by the actor Pierre Le Messier, stage name Bellerose, in the parish of Saint-Sauveur between 1630 and 1640 in Jal, Dictionnaire critique de biographie et d’histoire, 190.
119 Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 230. If the torchbearers were churchmen, they marched immediately in front of the Blessed Sacrament instead of with the cleric.
121 Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 265.
122 Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 230.
Sacrament in a ciborium, or ornamental chalice with a lid, which he held at chest height. Around his neck, suspended like a necklace by a thick cord, the priest wore a sack made of purple silk if the sick person were to receive Extreme Unction.\(^{123}\) In it, he carried the holy oil with which he would anoint the invalid. As he walked, he sang psalms, hymns, and canticles at medium volume.\(^{124}\) On either side of the priest marched members of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament or, in their absence, “the most qualified people available,” who carried the supports for a small canopy that covered the priest and the consecrated host.\(^{125}\) The rest of the assembled laypeople followed the priest and the Blessed Sacrament, carrying their candles. By arranging people and objects in accordance with the clergy’s sense for their relative power and importance, the procession restored the order and hierarchy that theatergoing tended to erode.

Upon arriving at the actor’s home, the procession turned his or her house into a proxy for the church building. This temporary transmutation reversed the church’s own permeability: whereas actors had turned the cemetery into a theater, here priests converted the actor’s home into a chapel. In the same way that the church’s permeability meant that its space extended into the surrounding streets and squares, priests expected an ailing penitent to prepare not only his home but also the surrounding zones. Beuvelet’s manual requires that the invalid and his or her family clean not just the sick person’s room, but also the streets leading to the house, in preparation for the procession: “How must the sick person’s room be decorated?” asks Beuvelet.\(^{126}\) “[T]he room, the steps and all the avenues must be clean,” he replies, “the spiders removed, and other indecent things, like garbage and mud, if there is any in front of the door.”

Inside the room, the family made the area as much like a chapel as possible. The manual instructed them to take down any “dishonest paintings” – otherwise the priest would not come – and to hang white sheets on all the walls.\(^{127}\) Near the invalid and positioned so as to be “in the sick person’s view,” they placed a table dressed so as to resemble an altar. Beuvelet specified that it was to be “covered only with a nice tablecloth, a Crucifix in the middle, two candelabra on either side with white candles, a stoup with an asperser to its right, [and] behind the Cross a painting, or white linen, or one can attach bouquets.”\(^{128}\) By extending the church’s territory into the interior space of an actor’s house, a priest compensated for the territorial losses imposed, from an ecclesiastical perspective, upon the church by the theater. By setting up an altar in an actor’s room, a priest won a small symbolic victory over the stage.

\(^{123}\) Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 257.
\(^{124}\) Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 230.
\(^{125}\) Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 228: (“qu’il [le petit dais] soit porté par les plus qualifiés qui s’y rencontrent, ou par les Confrères du S. Sacrement...”).
\(^{126}\) Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 226: (“Comment faut-il que la chambre du malade soit ornée? 1. Que la chambre, les degrés & toutes la avenuës soient bien nettes, que les arraignées soient ostées, & autres choses indecentes, mesmes les ordures & les bouës, s’il y en a devant la porte.”).
\(^{127}\) The instructions read, “That nothing ridiculous appears in the room against the walls, like grotesque, landscapes, and all other dishonest paintings, in which case one should not go; and if possible, the room should be hung in white linens.” See Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 226–227: (“Qu’il ne paroisse rien de ridicule dans la chambre contre les muraillies, comme grotesque, paysage, & toute autre peinture des-honneste, à moins de quoy il ne faudroit pas y aller; mais s’il se peut, qu’elle soit tendue de linges blancs”).
\(^{128}\) Beside the makeshift altar, just as in a chapel, the manual demanded a second small table for other ceremonial items. It was to be covered with a white napkin upon which the family placed a pitcher with water, a handtowel, a basin, and a glass with a bit of wine for the sick person to sip after receiving communion. Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 227: (“Qu’il y ait une table, s’il se peut, en veué du malade; couverte d’une belle nappe blanche seulement, un Crucifix au milieu, deux chandeliers aux deux costez, avec deux cierges blancs, un benistier, avec un aspersoir à droite, derrier la Croix un tableau, ou du ligne blanc, où on peut attacher des bouquets”).
Even before the procession’s arrival at a sick person’s bedside, the spatialization of an invalid’s body began with the transmutation from room to chapel. These preparations absorbed the sick person’s body into the liturgical setting, whitewashing, like the walls, his or her presence as a character with agency in the ensuing encounter. For an actor, this blotting out of his or her body achieved a sort of erasure. While draping the room in white sheets, the family covered the invalid too, assimilating him with the walls. Beuvelet asks that “the bed of the sick person be entirely covered with white linens so that nothing dirty appears, that there be a white napkin in front of him, and another around his neck that covers him entirely in the front.”

When the Blessed Sacrament at last arrived, the greeting it received assimilated the invalid’s body to the procession’s path. “Finally, upon the entry of the Blessed Sacrament,” writes Beuvelet, “one [should] burn some sort of perfume, or scatter flowers and odiferous herbs along the avenues, in the room on the table, an on the bed of the sick person.” Like an avenue or a table, the sick person’s body provided a space across which the Blessed Sacrament would traverse. Indeed, the first thing the priest did after entering the room was make the sign of the cross over the invalid with the ciborium before placing it on the table.

As the procession participants gathered into a sick person’s house to witness the reception of the sacraments, their presence framed the way the ceremonial interaction in the makeshift chapel reorganized the dynamics of the theatrical spectacles in which a comédien like Brécourt had played. The assembly’s attention and participation set the scene for a priestly display of ceremonial expertise. When the sick person was an actor and the procession participants included performers and playgoers, the priest thus had an extraordinary opportunity to co-opt an actor’s public. During the rites that unfolded next, the priest had all the interesting lines, asked all the questions, and coordinated all the action. More than one priest must have been tempted in such circumstances to pontificate at length in front of his captive audience, because Beuvelet warns clergymen “to not tire the sick person or those in attendance with long discourses.” In contrast to the actor’s convalescence and his or her partial erasure under white linens, the curé’s ceremonial agency appeared all the greater. The priest displaced the actor as the one to watch.

It was in this context that the curé demanded that an actor renounce the theater. The threat of sacramental refusal served as a frame for the ceremonies that would follow. After asking those in attendance to briefly withdraw out of earshot while the priest heard the invalid’s confession – which had the advantage, when dealing with actors, of preventing them from re-taking center stage through a touching performance of contrition – the priest required that the actor make a public apology for his or her stage craft before receiving absolution. Without

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129 Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 227: (“Que le lit du malade soit tout couvert de linge blanc, en sorte que rien de sale ne paroisse, qu’il y ait une serviette blanche devant luy, & une autre autour du col, qui le couvre entierement pardevant”).
130 Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 227: (“Enfin, qu’à l’entrée du Saint Sacrement on brusle quelque parfum, ou qu’on seme des fleurs & herbes odiforantes aux advenuës, & dans la chambre, sur la table & sur le lit du malade”).
131 Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 231.
132 Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 224: (“Ne point ennuyer le malade, ny les assistans, par la longueur de ses discours”).
133 After the priest made the sign of the cross over the sick person with ciborium, he asked whether the invalid had already confessed. If not, Beuvelet instructs the priest that “it is necessary to hear him [confess], and to make those present step back to a fair distance.” See Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 231: (“Après quoy il l’exhorte, luy demandant s’il n’a pas besoin de reconciliation (auquel casil faudroit l’entendre, & faire retirer les assistans dans une juste distance”)}.
absolution, the actor could not receive the last rites or burial. “What are the satisfactions and reparations that one must require of public sinners before according them Absolution?” Beuvelet’s manual asks, replying:

One must, if they are sick, oblige them to ask publicly for pardon from the entire assembly present in the room – when you take them the Viaticum or Extreme Unction – for the scandal they have created.\(^{134}\)

With his friends, family, and former spectators watching, the actor thus ushered himself off stage. But more importantly, the brief interregnum before his renunciation of the theater – the moments in which, if he were to suddenly die, he would die without the sacraments – served to underline the importance of the Church’s ceremonies. Although ceremonies operated tactically, the decision to withhold them infused ceremonial action with the gravity of place.

The actor’s spatialization then began in earnest. Rather than people, the main agents became body parts and ceremonial objects: tongues, eyes, fingers, wafers, crosses. Consequently, although the last rites constituted in some ways, as my semantic choices in the preceding paragraphs implies, a scene – the procession participants form an audience, the actor’s house the priest’s stage, and the sacraments a drama in which the priest plays the lead role, thereby dominating the actor – the sacraments in fact used touch, sound, and scent to disperse or deconstruct each person’s particularity; their status as character or \textit{personnage}. A ceremonial logic of proximity and association, rather than narrative, gave coherence to the larger liturgical body instantiated through the rites. In a century of character-driven drama, the erasure of \textit{personnage} amounted to an attack on the dramatic form.

In the Viaticum, the dispersion of the sick person’s body into an array of ceremonially associated spaces occurred through fixity. First the head, then the hands, then the eyes, then the tongue had to freeze, isolating each zone of the body for ceremonial action. The body parts, or zones, could not interact with one another unless in doing so they assumed the form of a ceremonial object. “Being ready to receive the holy Host,” wrote Beuvelet of the good communicant, “you must keep your body straight and still, without tilting the head, either before or after receiving the holy Host.”\(^{135}\) The communicant could not touch one hand to another unless they were “folded in a cross, one inside the other.”\(^{136}\) The eyes had to stay arrested, gazing intently at the floor and then directly at the wafer: “Before the holy Host is shown you must keep the eyes modestly lowered, but when [the holy Host] is shown, and they say \textit{Ecce Agnus Dei}, you must lift your gaze and focus (\textit{jetter}) your eyes upon it, without letting them wander elsewhere.”\(^{137}\) Even when the priest raised the holy Host directly in front of the communicant before administering it, the communicant was not supposed to look at the priest. Agency resided in and passed from the wafer to the communicant’s eyes and tongue, not from the priest’s personal qualities or the emotions that a shared glance could convey. Beuvelet instructed: “When

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\(^{134}\) Beuvelet, \textit{Instruction sur le manuel}, 159–160: (“Quells sont les satisfactions ou reparations qu’il faut exiger de ces pecheurs publics avant que leur accorder l’Absolution? Il faut, s’ils sont malades, les obliger à demander publiquement pardon à toute l’assemblée qui se trouvera dans la chambre, quand on leur portera le viatique, ou l’Extreme-Onction, du scandale qu’ils ont donné”).

\(^{135}\) Beuvelet, \textit{Instruction sur le manuel}, 205: (“Estant prest de recevoir la sainte Hostie, il faut tenir le corps droit & arresté, sans pancher la teste, ny devant ny devant la reception de la sainte Hostie”).


\(^{137}\) Beuvelet, \textit{Instruction sur le manuel}, 206: (“Auparavant que l’on montre la sainte Hostie il faut tenir les yeux modestement baissez: mais quand on la montre, & l’on dit, Ecce Agnus Dei, il faut lever la veuë, & jitter les yeux dessus, sans les écartier ailleurs”).
the Priest presents the Host to each individual, they must not look at the Priest but only at the holy Host.”

The tongue, as the most active zone of the communicant’s body, had to reveal itself. To this effect, the communicant “opened the mouth halfway and approached the tongue to just above the lower lip,” before holding still with the mouth half open and tongue extended until the Priest had deposited the wafer and withdrawn his hand. Fixity isolated each part of the communicant’s body – likening every extended tongue to every other – and activated these parts.

At the Viaticum’s conclusion, a series of signs of the cross reconnected the communicant’s ceremonially activated body parts by associating them to sacramental objects that in turn linked the invalid to the priest. First, the priest read a passage from the Gospel of John not “to” but “over” or “on” – _sur_ – the sick person, covering him with words. As with every gospel reading, the gospel commenced with three signs of the cross made over the forehead, mouth, and chest. The priest and sick person made these signs in unison, each to himself. After the reading, the priest made a sign of the cross over the sick person’s entire body, then made the penitent kiss the end of his stole – which during the reading had been used to cover the priest’s head – and finally ended the sacrament by making the sign of the cross over the penitent one last time using the ciborium. These signs reinte grated the zones of the invalid’s body that had been fixed, disconnected, and ceremonially activated during the Viaticum. However, instead of reconstituting the sick person as a self-contained individual, the closing signs of the cross absorbed the invalid into a broader network of ceremonially activated bodies and objects: the top of the priest’s head, his forehead, mouth, and lips, his stole, and the Gospel. The parts of an actor’s body that, on stage, worked in unison to convey character thus found themselves redistributed and resignified.

Whereas the Viaticum had concerned communion, Extreme Unction again concerned penitence, “supplementing the weakness of nature” at a time when “the extreme need of the sick person” made it such that he “could not help himself.” The Sacrament of Extreme Unction enacted yet more radically the sick person’s liturgical identity as a constellation of activated body parts and ceremonial objects. The rite replaced the residual human agency in each potentially ceremonial zone of the invalid’s body with the holy oil’s sacramental action, while simultaneously transferring the sick person’s religious responsibilities outward to the priest and assembled witnesses, thereby liturgically dispersing what remained of the person’s ability to act, whether in the conventional or the theatrical sense. The sacrament achieved the replacement, transfer, and dispersal of agency by dealing predominantly in liquids, signs of the cross, and prayers, all of which served to penetrate or join the various sacramental participants. Holy water

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138 Beuvelet, _Instruction sur le manuel_, 206–207: (“Lors que le Prestre presente l’Hostie à chacun en particulier, il ne faut pas regarder le Prestre, mais la sainte Hostie seulement”).

139 Beuvelet, _Instruction sur le manuel_, 206: (“ouvrir la bouche mediocrement, & approcher la langue à fleur de la lèvre d’embas”).

140 I borrow the concept of activation from Michael Wintroub. I will discuss this concept at greater length in my revision of the Rituals chapter. In a discussion about shamans and ritual objects, Wintroub writes, “Objects ... only become charismatic, only perform, in conjunction with particular acts and particular kinds of skilled humans – those who have the cultural and spiritual dispositions capable of, as it were, turning them ‘on.’” See Michael Wintroub, “Taking a Bow in the Theater of Things,” _Isis_ 101, no. 4 (December 2010): 787. In early modern France, Catholic ceremonies can be seen as a means of activation, capable of “turning on” – and off – not only religious items like crosses but also everyday things like water or fields.

141 Beuvelet, _Instruction sur le manuel_, 235, 275: (“suppléer à l’infirmité de la nature;” “A cause de l’extrême besoin qu’en a pour lors un malade, qui ne se peut ayer soy-mesme”).
recalled the waters of baptism. The sign of the cross recalled the union of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as one person in the trinity, to which Christians were joined by Jesus’ death on the cross. And the prayers of the priest and of the assembly stood in for the sick person’s diminished agency. As Beuvelet put it, “Why do we say so many prayers in the administration of this Sacrament...? ... Because the sick person can no longer do any act of Penitence,” affirming, “That is why it is very important that those in attendance pray fervently for his relief.” These sacramental elements and devotional actions reconstituted the penitent’s body as a spatial matrix, not unlike the church building’s spatial expanse: the penitent’s boundaries no longer stopped at the edge of his body.

The rite deployed liquids, crosses, and prayers in waves, progressively unifying the assembly into one liturgical body and exteriorizing the inner work the invalid could no longer do. After aspersing both the sick person and the assembly with holy water flung in the shape of a cross – a gesture that unified everyone present – the priest covered the sick person’s body with objects that externalized the work of penance, placing a haircloth shaped like a cross on his head and drawing a cross on his chest with ashes. The priest ceremonially washed his hands and then, holding the flacon of holy oil in his left hand and a small baton in his right, he proceeded to anoint each of seven zones on the sick person’s body, beginning always on the right side if the zone had two parts. He anointed each eye, each ear, each nostril (or, if in a hurry, the tip of the nose), the mouth, the chest, the back of each hand, and the top of each foot, wiping each anointed zone with a cotton swab that would later be burned. Like a procession of the priest’s hand across the surface of the sick person’s body, the sacrament partitioned, activated, and reorganized the spatial relations that made up the sick person’s identity.

Where a connection among the sick person’s own parts had given coherence to his or her identity during life, the sacrament transferred the source of coherence to the points of contact, scents, and sounds that linked the sick person to the beyond and to the extended church community. The holy oil signaled on the body’s outside the work that the Holy Spirit would do on the inside. The oil’s warm, olive odor symbolized ascendance. Meanwhile, the people’s prayers further activated the action operated by the oil, thereby merging their voices with the

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145 Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 275: (“Pourquoy fait-on tant de prieres en l’administration de ce Sacrement...? ...C’est pourquoy il importe beaucoup que les assistans fassent des prieres ferventes pour son soulagement. Car comme le malade ne peut plus faire aucune oeuvre de Penitence, tout ce qui luy reste est d’avoir recours à la misericorde divine, de qui nous n’obtenons la remission que par la priere”).

146 As Beuvelet explained in regards to the prayers said during the sacrament, “there is communication between the Christians who are here below and the blessed who are in Heaven, and together we form only one body and one Church...” See Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 266–267, 277: (“il y a communication entre les Christiens qui sont icy bas avec les Bien-heureux qui sont au Ciel, & qu’eux & nous ne faisons qu’un mesme corps & une mesme Eglise...”).

penitent’s body. Although the sick person’s soul would have to face the hour of death alone, liturgically his body and human agency had been distributed among these other participants by the sacrament. They, whether people or objects, would bear the responsibility for interceding to God on the invalid’s behalf until the sick person passed to the next life. When administered to an actor, the sacrament of Extreme Unction therefore conquered theatrical spectacle with ceremony. By replacing a person’s private body with a liturgical body – a body that could engage in symbolic action but not, given its global, networked character, imitate a specific person – the actor could no longer play a role.

Upon the sick person’s death, if he were an actor, the final procession from the actor’s house to the church for his burial publicized the priest’s tactical victory over stage-playing. The body that had been a source of competition for the liturgy now served as a pretext and central element in the church’s own ceremonial display. The clergy processed to the house to collect the corpse – their procession headed by a cross and accompanied by people carrying torches and candles and singing hymns – and then carried the body back to the church in the same manner. This funeral procession from the deceased person’s home back to the church instantiated the church as a “place,” a final resting place. Processions would continue to come and go, but the body would not leave. Beuvelet warned priests to not permit “any corpse, once buried, to be transported from the Cemetery to another Church, or in the same Cemetery from one place to another, without the express permission of the Superiors.” Finally, before placing the body in the ground the clergy exposed the deceased person’s body in the nave while saying a mass or vespers in its honor: “Always celebrate Mass, if it is the morning, presente corpore, to observe the ancient and religious custom of the Church. And if it is afternoon, say the Vespers of the dead in the presence of the body.” If the body were that of an actor, this funereal display restored to the clergy of Saint-Sulpice, in some small measure, the tactical authority diminished by the success and permanence of the Comédie-Française in their parish. For the length of the service, the priests of Saint-Sulpice could deploy the remains of their rival in the production of liturgical splendor.

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148 According to Beuvelet, “It is constant that prayer here [during the Extreme-Unction] accomplishes much ... and more than in any other Sacrement ... in the Sacrament of Extreme Unction one receives grace in proportion to the prayers that are said.” See Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 275–276: (“il est constant que la priere y [dans l’Extreme-Onction] fait beaucoup ... & plus qu’en tout autre Sacrement... en ce Sacrement de l’Extreme-Onction, on y reçoit la grace à proportion des prieres qu’on y fait”).

149 The clergy guarded the right to conduct funeral processions very jealously. In a section listing things to avoid and prohibit, Beuvelet indicated “That bodies not be carried from the house to the Parish, or from the Parish to another Church secretly, or in a carriae, without being accompanied by the clergy, and witout the other ceremonies...” See Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 129: (“Que les corps ne soient portez de la maison à la Paroisse, ou de la Paroisse à une autre Eglise en cachette, & dans un carosse, sans estre accompagné du Clergy’, & sans les autres cérémonies...”).

150 Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 87.

151 Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 129: (“De permettre qu’aucun corps une fois enterré, soit transporté d’un Cimetièrue ou d’une Eglise en l’autre, ou dan le meme Cimetièrue, d’un lieu à autre, sans l’expesse licence des Superieurs”).

152 Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 228: (“Celebrer tousjours la Messe, si c’est le matin presente corpore, pour observer en cela l’ancienne & religieuse coustume de l’Eglise. Et si c’est l’apres midy, dire les Vespres des morts en la presence du corps”).
Church as Place

Priests used sacramental refusal as a last resort in their relations with the theater. Although scholarship has framed the debates between the Church and the theater as a moral quarrel, these relations were first and foremost spatial before being moral. Access to and control over city streets, the timing and meaning of sounds like bells and music, and the responsiveness of passersby when clergy processed with the Blessed Sacrament precipitated tension between priests and actors. Actors – especially those from the professional troupes – did not have a great need to control the sounds and crowds that emanated from or gathered around their theater. These emanations certainly enhanced the excitement of attending the theater, but the nature of the spectacle that drew people to the Comédie-Française – its plays and performers – would not have been diminished if the theater’s walls were soundproof or its entryway large enough so that everyone could wait inside before the show. For priests, on the other hand, the sounds and movements that emanated from the church building constituted a crucial extension of the liturgical action conducted at the altar. To block, impede, or ignore bell-ringing and processions was paramount, from an ecclesiastical perspective, to interrupting mass and, by extension, to insulting God’s divine presence in the Blessed Sacrament. For priests, ceremonial overflow served an additional function. Ceremonies provided the most effective way to achieve tactical dominance in a space characterized by permeability. Ambulatory ceremonies in particular, like processions, enabled priests to insinuate themselves – to borrow de Certeau’s phrase – into the other’s place, thereby drawing distant sites into the vast liminal area that was outside the church building and yet part of it.

However, by the late seventeenth-century, seminary education, priestly professionalization, and the launching of church building projects had inspired priests to want not just ecclesial space, but the parish church as a “place,” a stronghold from which they could exercise their authority. Spatial conflicts with nearby theaters revealed the degree to which the parish priest and his clergy, despite their efforts to establish the church as closed place, could still not act strategically in relation to their neighbors. Claude Bottu de la Barmondière, Saint-Sulpice’s parish priest from 1678 to 1689, pursued every possible strategic option in his spatial contests with the theaters near his church – recourse to the police, to the king, and to financial ownership – to no avail. In the context of strategic weakness, sacramental refusals presented a tactical way for priests to reassert the ceremonial basis for their local authority. The initial refusal of sacraments to an actor enabled the priest to figure the church as a “place,” one whose doors he could shut at will. Processions to and from the actor’s house recruited the actor’s audience, at least ceremonially, into liturgical action and diverted spectators from the theater. The actor’s renunciation of the stage, delivered in front of the assembled procession participants, underlined the importance of ceremonies. And the sacraments, by absorbing the actor into a liturgical body, symbolically decomposed the theater’s mimetic resources. Although ultimately sacramental exclusions foreshadowed a church’s impotence against a rival, in the short term they afforded priests a way to turn the tables temporarily to the liturgy’s advantage.

One might ask, in conclusion, why Joseph Languet de Gergy, Saint-Sulpice’s parish priest three generations after Barmondière, did not want to reabsorb Adrienne Lecouvreur into the liturgical body, ceremonially reclaim her house, or even conduct the humblest of funeral rites? Why did he forgo the opportunity to ceremonially assert the Church’s dominance over the theater, or to perform its cemetery as a “place”? One answer can be found in the church building.
In 1718, Languet de Gergy had renewed construction on the parish church. In 1723, he had initiated the completion of the nave by leading the construction workers in a procession around the church’s circumference. Although when Lecouvre died in 1730 the nave was still not quite complete – according to Doncourt the church was not “sufficiently closed” so as to be rededicated as a “new” building until 1745 – the church had already begun to lose its permeable character. Ceremonies, too, had changed. Instead of using processions and masses to extend the church’s tactical authority over the surrounding streets, Languet de Gergy directed his ceremonial energies toward furthering the construction project, marking each new phase of the project with an elaborate ceremony. As ceremonies turned inward, reabsorption of rivals grew less important. Likewise, as the priests of Saint-Sulpice exercised their ceremonial expertise with greater skill, the theater posed less of a threat. For example, according to the Mercure, Languet de Gergy’s procession around the circumference of the church in 1723 brought witnesses to tears. Finally, Languet de Gergy’s choice of an architect for the church’s façade perhaps best represents the church’s eighteenth-century status as a “place” capable of ignoring the theater. Languet de Gergy chose the scene designer Giovanni Nicolo Servandoni, famous for his opera settings. Thus, by the mid-eighth century, the church building had absorbed theatricality into its very walls. Established in their newly grand building, the priests of Saint-Sulpice had less need to decompose the theater by sacramentally reabsorbing actors.

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155 Doncourt, Remarques historiques, sur l’Église et la paroisse de S. Sulpice, 1:15.
158 Lemesle, L’Église Saint-Sulpice, 29–43; For a brief discussion of Servandoni’s designs for the theater, see Cole Wendell, “The Salle Des Machines: Three Hundred Years Ago,” Educational Theatre Journal 14, no. 3 (1962): 226.
Figure 7. Detail from the Turgot map of Paris (1739), showing the Church of Saint-Sulpice in the upper right corner and the Foire Saint-Germain on the opposite side of the Rue des Aveugles.
CHAPTER THREE

Public Persons and Public Sinners

The theater’s ecclesiastical opponents, as is well known, chose the term “public” to define the moral failing of actors. As a professor from the Seminary of Saint-Magloire named Pierre Le Brun (1661-1729) explained in two discours, or lectures, against the theater that he presented to an audience of priests in 1694,

The Church does indeed tolerate them [actors], but in the way that she tolerates scandalous and public sinners. The Ritual of Paris declares them as such and it orders that if they dare approach the holy table [the altar], we push them away as people who are manifestly infamous.\(^1\)

The term “public” when applied to actors had a bad connotation. Le Brun compares the actor’s publicity to that of a prostitute, likening Paris’ stage players to “the most famous Courtesans” expelled from Rome by Pope Pius V, and the Ritual of Paris to which Le Brun referred associated them not only with prostitutes, magicians, sorcerers, and blasphemers but also with people who were violently ill or insane.\(^2\) By lumping actors together with people whose unruly bodies defied control or threatened contagion, the term “public” implied that actors defied the social and in some cases legal norms that governed commerce, bodily contact, and self presentation.

However, priests also applied the term “public” to themselves. During the same period in which churchmen began to denounce actors as public sinners, the secular clergy began to emphasize the parish priest’s status as a personne publique or “public person.” Jean-Jacques Olier (1608-1657), the founder of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, wrote that “being public persons,” priests were “charged by their condition to enclose ... in themselves as much religion as all mankind together.”\(^3\) A priest’s status as a public person derived from his responsibility for the Church’s pastoral and liturgical tasks, or what early modern clergymen called “exterior” functions like ceremonies, sacraments, and preaching. In a treatise on the priesthood published in 1676 by Louis Tronson (1622-1700) and based on manuscripts penned by Olier, the seminary’s third Superior General defined priests in terms of their publicness at the altar. After explaining that the Christian religion entailed not only interior duties but also exterior ones, like the mass,

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1 Le Brun, *Discours sur la comédie, où on voit la réponse au théologien qui la defend, avec l’Histoire du théâtre, & les sentimens des docteurs de l’Eglise depuis le premier siecle jusqu’à présent.*, 142: (“L’Eglise les tolere en effet, mais de la maniere qu’elle tolere les pecheurs publics & scandaleux. Le Rituelt de Paris les declare tels, & il ordonne que s’ils osent s’approcher de la sainte table, on les repoussera comme des personnes manifestement infames”). Emphasis on “public sinner” is mine. Emphasis on “manifestly infamous” is in the original. All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.


Tronson wrote: “Ecclesiastics are those who publicly perform these outer functions and who are established by God to render unto Him these public duties on behalf of and in the name of all the faithful.”

Similarly, in 1716, Le Brun – still a professor at the Seminary of Saint-Magloire in Paris – published a textbook about the ceremonies of the mass in which he defined liturgy as the Church’s “public action or work.” A translation of “liturgy” that hews closer to the term’s Greek roots would be “a work of the people” or “work pertaining to the people;” a translation that emphasizes the liturgy’s corporate nature without implying a demarcation between doers and watchers or an emphasis on visuality.

Le Brun’s translation, on the other hand, evokes the manifest quality that liturgical ceremonies had acquired by the early eighteenth century as a result of seminary training. Priestly publicness mirrored theatrical publicness.

The classification of actors as “public” sinners and of secular priests as “public” persons raises questions about what it meant to publish, be public, and participate in a public in early modern France. What kind of public did the notion of “public” sinner imply? What does the Catholic Church’s use of the category “public” to classify actors as sinful reveal about the way early modern churchmen understood their own public activities? What differentiated a public sinner from a parish priest? This chapter argues that the difference between a parish priest’s public personhood and an actor’s public “sin” arose from the way priests learned to think about and construct their bodily boundaries. Whereas an actor, from an ecclesiastical perspective, remained a private person inappropriately exposed to a crowd, seminary training taught priests to craft themselves as the source or wellspring of a liturgical public. In everyday practice this meant that a priest who successfully constructed himself as a public person adopted habits of self-presentation that made it difficult to identify where his body began and ended. By examining two ways in which a priest’s publicness during the sacraments resembled that of an actor’s publicness on stage – priests wore costumes and they performed in front of an assembly – I show how priestly habits of self-presentation differentiated clergymen from actors by diffusing and obscuring a priest’s body. Liturgically, a priest’s body extended beyond himself into other bodies and objects, while physically it remained hidden under robes or subordinated to clerical functions. Two types of media – ceremonies and archival writing – enabled a priest to diffuse and obscure his body. Thanks to these media, when a priest appeared before worshippers his exposure could not constitute a crime because he did not, from an ecclesiastical perspective, display himself. Rather, his body served as the vehicle for a liturgical bond.

4 Chaillot, Cochois, and Noye, Traité des Saints Ordres (1676), compare aux écrits authentiques de Jean-Jacques Olier (†1657), 45: (“Les Ecclésiastiques sont ceux qui font publiquement ces fonctions extérieures, et qui sont établis de Dieu pour lui rendre ces devoirs publics de la part et au nom de tous les fidèles”).


Public Persons 114

Public

Before examining the way priestly self-presentation differentiated clergymen from actors, the term “public” requires consideration. Since the 1980s, when English translations of Norbert Elias’ *The Court Society* and Jürgen Habermas’ *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* became available and a series of excellent monographs on France’s early modern state ceremonies appeared, scholarship has treated the quality of being public as a positive trait enjoyed only by people of rank under the Ancien Régime. The classification of actors as “public sinners” serves as a much needed reminder that being public, except under special circumstances, implied disrepute for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French subjects. As Le Brun’s emphasis on the “manifest” nature of the actor’s profession suggests, the quality of being public concerned primarily the exterior aspects of a person, place, or thing. The fact that when people performed on stage everyone could see them was part of what merited the term “public,” along with the fact that spectators paid to see actors. Actors were “public” because their craft rendered them visible and available. The secular clergy in the seventeenth century walked a fine line between negative and positive forms of public presence since their efforts to professionalize made them increasingly visible and available at the altar, from the pulpit, and in the confessional. The secular clergy’s great challenge was to construct rank-endowing forms of publicity for parish priests so as to differentiate the clergyman’s visibility and availability from that of the actor and prostitute, while at the same time preserving the self-effacement appropriate to the priestly vocation. Seminary-trained secular clergymen consequently provide a window into the murky region between two early modern meanings of “public.” A few working definitions of “public” will shed light on the ambiguous status that priests and actors shared in relation to the people who watched them.

The positive type of publicity that interested Habermas and Elias identified a person’s authority with his or her physical body, but in a way that attributed that authority to a source beyond the person’s control; to a source like God or birth. Habermas describes the publicness specific to early modern people of rank as an “aura of feudal authority.” For him (or rather his translators), the neologism “publicness” captures the way seventeenth-century French speakers deployed “public” primarily as an adjective rather than a noun. “This publicness (or publicity) of representation was not constituted as a social realm, that is, as a public sphere,” writes Habermas, “rather, it was something like a status attribute … inseparable from the lord’s concrete existence, that, as an ‘aura,’ surrounded and endowed his authority.” Priests like Jean-Jacques Olier and Pierre Le Brun would have called this aura éclat, seeing in it the splendor associated with majesty. Unlike the public sphere which, according to Habermas’ model emerged through and facilitated critical discussion among private people about matters of general concern, publicness resided in and emanated from a person of rank’s bodily presence. Habermas’ favorite example is the manorial lord, who had to represent his status as lord publicly. Habermas writes, “He displayed himself, presented himself as an embodiment of some sort of

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8 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 8.
9 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 7.
10 For more on éclat, see dissertation chapter one.
‘higher’ power.” A prince, too, represented his lordship “not for but ‘before’ the people,” just as the nobleman, “was authority inasmuch as he made it present. He displayed it, embodied it in his cultivated personality.” Other socially desirable characteristics, especially those thought to correlate with rank, like virtue, operated according to the same principle. “Virtue must be embodied,” writes Habermas, “it had to be capable of public representation.” Publicness therefore consisted, at least in part, in the physical embodiment of abstract possessions, like social status or virtue. Positive publicness had an intrinsic quality.

Although Habermas does not put it quite this way, the publicness associated with rank entailed an elastic subject boundary for the person embodying his or her social status or virtue. All of the props required in the public representation of lordship adhered to the noble “I,” even though the nobleman could not be reduced to the sum of such props. Habermas notes that

The staging of the publicity involved in representation was wedded to personal attributes such as insignia (badges and arms), dress (clothing and coiffure), demeanor (form of greeting and poise) and rhetoric (form of address and formal discourse in general). He offers a useful term for these props, calling them “surroundings.” People often made up the “surroundings,” right along with objects. For example, Habermas observes that “the relationship of the laity to the priesthood illustrates how the ‘surroundings’ were part and parcel of the publicity of representation (from which they were nevertheless excluded).” Habermas does not dwell on the relationship between props and aura, but his work suggests that the aura of authority associated with social rank resided in the “surroundings” that amplified the subject boundary of an appropriately public person; the more dense and populous the surroundings, the greater the aura of authority.

Seventeenth-century French dictionaries, however, paint a less glorious picture of publicness than Habermas. As even a quick comparison of the way Antoine Furetière and his contemporary, César-Pierre Richelet, defined the term “public” suggests, early moderns, at least in France, considered publicness a largely negative attribute rather than a lordly one. Early moderns applied the adjective “public” in three basic scenarios: in cases of exposure, in instances of common ownership or general accessibility, and in relation to types of authority grounded in writing and legislation rather than rank. The Dictionnaire français published by Richelet in 1680 defined the adjectival form of “public” in two ways, the first of which pertains to exposure and the second of which pertains to general accessibility:

Public, adj. Known, manifest. [His crime is public and people can talk about it. The thing is not yet public, but it will be soon.]

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11 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 7.
12 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 8.
14 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 8.
15 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 8–9.
16 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 8.
17 My tripartite classification of types of publicness is just one way of thinking about the problem and could be further nuanced in a longer essay. For a more complete list of the various relations between public and private, many of which have roots stretching back at least through early modernity, see Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 29.
Public, adj. Prostituted to the whole world. Of bad life. The word public in this sense is said of girls and women. [In law the servants in cabarets are considered public…] 18

For Richelet, an act done “publicly” joined these two meanings, making something known or manifest to the whole world indiscriminately. For example, his definition for the adverbial form of “public” reads: “Publicly, adv. In Public. In view of the world.” 19 Furetière’s definition differs from Richelet’s in that he adds several positive examples of publicness, like merchants, preachers, and lawyers. However, Furetière retains the link to prostitution, along with the notion that things “known and manifested to everyone” were bad. In fact, the visible expiation of sin constitutes Furetière’s first example of something public because known by all: “In the Primitive Church people did public penance.” 20 This common thread between Richelet and Furetière implies that exposure and accessibility constituted the core qualities of publicness, qualities that led to authority only in special cases. As their examples demonstrate – crimes, prostitution, public penance – for Richelet and Furetière the publicness acquired through exposure and accessibility had strongly criminal connotations. Consequently, in much the way that an actor’s “manifest” activity onstage constituted a negative type of publicness, a priest’s exposure at the altar – even though liturgical ceremonies could generate an aura of authority when performed well – rendered a priest’s publicness ambiguous.

Upon examination, the types of publicness that Furetière treats in a positive light temper the potentially criminal aspects of exposure and accessibility by channeling them through forms and functions that endowed legitimacy and authority. After providing a general definition of the word “public,” whose meaning he gives as a “Term relative and collective opposed to particular,” Furetière offers six clusters of examples: public assemblies, public officers, public judgments and crimes, commerce, that which is known and manifest (as already discussed), and public land. 21 Each example involving authority bears the trace of a conversion by means of which exposure and accessibility produce appropriate publicness because expressed through a legitimizing medium or exercised in the context of a culturally valued function. The use of “public” in relation to women provides an interesting example. Furetière observes that although in most cases the term “public” is “injurious” to women and “signifies that she prostitutes herself to all comers,” he notes that in the eyes of the Palace of Justice a woman who owns a shop (une Marchande) is legitimately “public” as long as she “maintains an open boutique and is obliged to do so by the things that she sells.” 22 The form of the open shop, as opposed to the privacy of a

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20 Antoine Furetière, “Public,” Dictionnaire universel, contenant generalement tous les mots français, tant vieux que modernes, & les termes de toutes les sciences et des arts… (La Haye: Chez Arnout & Renier Leers, 1690), http://gallica2.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k50614b: (“Public, se dit aussi de ce qui est connu & manifesté à tout le monde. En la Primitive Eglise on faisait des penitences publiques”).
21 Furetière, “Public”: (“Terme relatif & collectif opposé à particulier”).
22 Furetière, “Public”: (“injurieux, & signifie celle qui se prostitue à tous venans; “lors qu’elle tient boutique ouverte, & qu’elle s’oblige pour raison des choses dont elle fait commerce”).
brothel, legitimized the female merchant’s exposure, just as the function of selling goods classified as “commerce” by the Palace of Justice authorized her accessibility.

The conversion of exposure and accessibility into appropriate publicness also hinged on skillful display, as can be inferred from the example Furetière gives regarding assemblies. In the same way that the adjectival form of “public” had a primarily bad connotation, its substantive form was ambiguous too. Richelet defines the public as “The bulk of the multitude,” as a formless crowd, and Furetière does not clearly distinguish the substantive use of “public” from its adjectival uses, noting in passing that “Public is also said of an assembly open to everyone, or to a few select people.”

Interestingly, although Furetière acknowledges that appearing before an audience entails a risk – “It takes boldness to appear in public,” he declares – Furetière does not in this example attribute criminality to the people who do so.

Lawyers speak in public. Preachers preach in public. This President has given a public audience. One also says that an Author has given his works to the public when he has them printed. In the past it sufficed to circulate them by manuscript.

As with the female merchant, lawyers, preachers, presidents, and authors exposed themselves by appearing in public but their exposure arose from a recognized function (a lawyer speaks in public to present a case, a president’s duties require him to grant public audiences) and was legitimized by the medium of delivery (a pulpit legitimized the public speech of a preacher, print legitimized the ideas circulated by a writer). The term “public” acquires a substantive character in this example because the exposed person’s authority, or positive publicness, depended to some degree on the proficiency of his or her performance. For example, speech legitimized by a pulpit could still incite ridicule. For preachers, the conversion of negative publicness into authority ultimately depended on the proficiency of their sermon delivery; not on the pulpit but on their performance in the pulpit. This performance only the “public” in its substantive form could judge.

Neither sacraments nor stage-playing fit neatly into this category of display by means of which a person, like a lawyer or preacher, could appear in public and establish authority through personal proficiency. This non-fit had to do with the kind of “public” ceremonies and acting helped forge. The liturgy created a public by recruiting worshippers into God’s surroundings. A liturgical public operated according to the principles Habermas identifies as integral to lordship. Consequently, for priests, the ultimate goal was to create an aura of authority for the divine presence in the Eucharist and a priest’s public personhood drew its significance and legitimacy from his function as an extension and extender of God’s aura. The kind of ceremonial performance that seminary instructors considered good therefore deflected attention away from the self so as to either elicit adoration, veneration, and devotion for the divine presence or so as to draw attention to the corporate body forged through ceremonies. If a clergyman’s ceremonial proficiency attracted attention in its own right, this attention weakened the liturgical public and consequently detracted from the clergyman’s religious authority. An actor’s stage performance, by contrast, provided the occasion for an alternative type of association, for what Bronwen

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21 Richelet, “Public”: (“Le gros de la multitude”); Furetière’s definition begins, “Public, adj. & subst.” See Furetière, “Public”: (“Public, que. adj. m. & f. & subst.” “Public, se dit aussi d’une assemblée ouverte à tout le monde, ou à quelques personnes choisies”).

Wilson and Paul Yachnin call the “making [of] publics.” The early modern publics to which they refer “allowed people to connect with others in ways not rooted in family, rank, or vocation, but rather founded in voluntary groupings built on the shared interests, tastes, commitments, and desires of individuals.” A priest’s ceremonial action absorbed him into the publicness attributed to God’s presence in the Eucharist, whereas an actor’s acting summoned forth potentially unpredictable and norm-breaking interactions among spectators. An actor’s proficiency did not automatically produce legitimacy because their performances provided the occasion for a new kind of public.

Michael Warner’s discussion of publics – although he focuses on texts not performances – points to some of the ways in which stage-playing had the potential to allow people to connect with each other in modes not rooted in kinship, lordship, or profession. Warner identifies seven characteristics of a public in the modern sense, only three of which I will mention here: A public is self-organized, it is a relation among strangers, and it is created by the reflexive circulation of discourse. Rather than an aura of authority for actors or for the characters they represented, the public forged in response to stage-playing constituted a self-organizing relation among strangers joined together by the reflexive circulation of discourse. Whereas priests obliged people to attend mass, people attended the theater voluntarily. Whereas a parish included all the inhabitants of a specific, relatively small geographic zone with the result that the worshippers at mass were family members, friends, neighbors and enemies – anything but strangers – the people who gathered at a theater would not have known most of the other spectators. Finally, whereas priests tried to control which texts circulated about the mass so as to preserve its timelessness, an actor’s skilled performances helped put texts and images into circulation in ways that fostered a conversation over time and about time. Marc Fumaroli goes so far as to see the early modern theater as the “beginning of a lay public space, liberated from sacerdotal mediation” and to identify stage-playing as the cornerstone for the public sphere, “the model and best guarantee for

26 Wilson and Yachnin, Making Publics in Early Modern Europe, 1.
28 On the Catholic Church’s reluctance to let sacred texts, whether Biblical or liturgical, circulate among the laity, see Bernard Chédozeau, La Bible et la liturgie en français: l’Église tridentine et les traductions bibliques et liturgiques (1600-1789) (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1990). As Chédozeau explains in his introduction and first chapter, the Catholic Church in the seventeenth century prioritized oral transmission among the laity and promoted the circulation of secondary texts - explanations and instructions - rather than primary texts (11-43). Vernacular translations of liturgical texts, like the Missal, stirred up controversy in France. When Joseph de Voisin published the French translation of the Roman Missal in 1660, the assembly of bishops condemned it immediately and Pope Alexander VII condemned it in 1681, prohibiting further translations. See Violle, Paris, son Église et ses églises, 1:147–148; By contrast, the theater’s development as a performance genre went hand in hand with the discovery, circulation, and modification of texts, first Greek and Roman texts and then translations as well as Renaissance creations made according to the antique model. “The theater text ... participates in the formation of spectators,” writes Marie-Madeline Fragonard, “who can thereafter read as much or more than they see, since performances are rare and limited to certain cities or certain places.” See Marie-Madeleine Fragonard, “Troisième partie, ou l’apparition du ‘théâtre à texte’,” in Le Théâtre en France des origins à nos jours, ed. Alain Viala (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), 13: (“Le texte de théâtre ... participe à la formation des spectateurs, qui peuvent désormais lire autant ou plus qu’ils voient, puisque les spectacles sont rares et limités à certaines villes ou certains endroits”); For a fascinating study of how the French circulated ideas, stories, texts, and images about one of the seventeenth century’s great actors, Molière, during and after his lifetime in order to debate and construct matters of general concern, like French national identity, see Mechele Leon, Molière, the French Revolution, and the Theatrical Afterlife (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2009).
lay public space in its entirety.”

At the very least, as Bronwen and Yachnin point out, “By creating new forms of public association, cultural producers and consumers” – like actors and theatergoers – “in effect challenged dominant ideas about just who could be a public person…” Whether they intended to or not, actors subverted the social structures on which priests depended to construct appropriate clerical publicness; to establish themselves as public persons. Ceremonies and stage-playing consequently competed with each other for dominance in the ambiguous realm in which public appearance did not quite function as a form of legitimation and self display did not quite produce an aura of authority.

**Professionalization**

Secular clergymen in the seventeenth century cared about appropriate publicness because their responsibilities at the parish level as well as their position in the ecclesiastical hierarchy were in transition and these structural changes made parish priests more visible and more available to their parishioners. In other words, these changes made secular clergymen more public in a potentially damaging way. The Catholic Counter-Reformation made secular clergymen more visible and available in two basic ways, first by promoting an ideal of ecclesiastical perfection that expanded the clergyman’s pastoral tasks while multiplying the types of expertise he needed in order to accomplish those tasks, and second by demanding that churchmen reside in the parishes and dioceses where they possessed an ecclesiastical benefice. The title of a handbook written by an instructor from the Seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet expressed the ideal of ecclesiastical perfection and its corollary proliferation of priestly responsibilities. Titled, *Le Parfait ecclésiastique, ou diverses instructions sur toutes les fonctions cléricales* (The perfect ecclesiastic, or diverse instructions on all the clerical functions), its preface stated, “This book in short has as its goal the Perfect Churchman.”

Ecclesiastical perfection made priests more visible by requiring them to establish and assert their presence at the parish level. A pamphlet summarizing the “Powers, Rights, and Duties” of priests reminded them that a *curé* “must be established in his parish, in which the Parish Priest’s domicile must be and where he must reside by divine and human right.” Residency mattered because priests who sought perfection considered themselves mirrors. As a Spanish tract by Jean Avila, translated into French and published near the Seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet, explained to its readers:

> Our Lord Jesus Christ calls us the light of the world and the salt of the earth: light, because the Priest is a mirror and a light in which the people must look at themselves, to

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31 See the opening pages of the “Epistle” that precedes the preface. Croix, *Le Parfait ecclésiastique*, non–numbered pages: (“Ce livre enfin a pour but le Parfait Ecclesiastique”); Claude de la Croix (1598-1661) entered the seminary of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet as a seminarian in 1641. He had a talent for conducting liturgical ceremonies and was soon given the responsibility of teaching the administration of the sacraments. According to Joseph Grandet, he printed many pamphlets - some of them composed by Bourdoise - to teach priests how to conduct sacraments and to teach parishioners how to attend mass. His fellow clergymen assembled these pamphlets after de la Croix’s death to compose the volume on ecclesiastical perfection. See Grandet, *Les Saints prêtres français du XVIIe siècle, ouvrage publié pour la première fois, d’après le manuscrit original*, 2:257–260.

know by looking in it the shadows in which they walk, and to turn back toward themselves saying: Why am I not as good as this Priest?  

Aware of being watched and wanting to reinforce their status as models, secular clergymen who pursued their own perfection sought to be seen. So as to shine moral mirrors on their flock not only did they conduct sacraments in a way that preached to the eyes, they also undertook missions, reiterated Episcopal policies about regular Church attendance, and even set out into their parishes ringing hand bells to summon children to the catechism. Present and persistent in their interactions with parishioners, priests who aspired to ecclesiastical perfection placed themselves on display. Concerned about every parishioner’s salvation, the perfect churchman made himself available to walk in processions, conduct sacraments, and deliver last rites to his flock at all times of the day and night. Visible and available, the perfect churchman was public.

A priest who failed to craft his public presence according to the norms for self-presentation associated with ecclesiastical perfection could slip quickly from positive to negative publicness, from public person to public sinner. Exposed by their proliferated duties, clergymen under pressure to achieve perfection also found themselves under surveillance and on the brink of sacramental exclusion. Priests who embraced ecclesiastical perfection as their objective scrutinized each other. Confessors who deemed that a fellow priest had failed in his duties alienated him from the sacraments right along with playgoers and actors. In his Ritual of 1673, for example, Nicolas Pavillon, the bishop of Alet, placed poorly performing parish priests on a list of people to whom confessors should refuse absolution. “Who are the people to whom one must defer or refuse absolution for being engaged in the next occasions of sin, until they have removed themselves from these occasions?” asked Pavillon. Curés topped the list of public persons who should be treated as public sinners:

This also applies to certain kinds of public persons, like parish priests, judges, doctors, apothecaries, and surgeons, who notoriously are not capable of their responsibilities and

33 Jean Avila, *Discours aux prestres contenant une doctrine fort nécessaire à tout ceux lesquels estans élevez à cette haute dignité desirant que Dieu leur soit propice au dernier jugement, composé en espagnol par le R.P. Jean Avila, prestre, & traduit en français*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Chez Pierre Trichard, rue S. Victor, proche S. Nicolas du Chardonnet, 1658), 12–13: (“Nosstres Seigneur Jesus-Christ nous appelle la lumiere du monde, & le sel de la terre: la lumiere, à cause que le Prestre est un miroir & une lumiere en laquelle les peuples doivent se mirer, pour conoistres en la voyant les tenebres dans lesquelles ils cheminent, & pour rentrer en eux mesmes, disans: Pourquoy ne suis-je pas aussi bon que ce Prestre?”).

34 According to Simon de Doncourt, in the parish of Saint-Sulpice Jean-Jacques Olier, its parish priest, “undertook the instruction of Catholics by almost continuous Catechisms and exhortations; and so that no one could dispense with hearing the word of God, he had the people assembled by the sound of a handbell in all the neighborhoods of the Suburb, and there his Priests broke by means of the Catechism the bread of the word of God for the children. These Catechisms were held regularly every Sunday and all Feast days of the year, and sometimes three or four times per week…” See Doncourt, *Remarques historiques, sur l’Eglise et la paroisse de S. Sulpice*, 1:36: (“Il entreprit l’instruction des Catholiques par des Catéchismes & par des exhortations presque continues: & afin que personne ne se dispensât d’entendre la parole de Dieu, il faisoit assembler le peuple au son d’une clochette dans tous les quartiers du Fauxbourg, & là ses Prêtres rompoient par des Cathéchismes le pain de la parole de Dieu aux enfans. Ces Catéchismes se faisoient régulièrement tous les Dimanches & toutes les Fêtes de l’année, & quelquefois trois & quatre fois la semaine…”).

35 Pavillon, *Les Instructions du rituel du diocese d’Alet*, 132: (“Quelles sont les personnes ausquelles on doit différer, ou refuser l’absolution, pour estre engagées dans les occasions prochaines du peché, jusques à ce qu’elles s’en soient éloignées?”).
jobs, with the result that they are exposed to a continual danger of making mistakes and committing notable injustices and who are consequently in the next occasions of sin.\textsuperscript{36}

By refusing absolution to poorly performing parish priests, Pavillon’s Ritual treated bad priests like actors.

Visible priestly mistakes, much like stage performances, unleashed what confessors called “scandal.”\textsuperscript{37} The sin of “scandalous people” was public both because other people could see them sinning and because they created what confessors called “next occasions of sin” for others.\textsuperscript{38} As Matthieu Beuvelet of the Seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet explained in his Instruction sur le manuel, “next occasions of sin” included “all things that can be the cause of it [sin], or those that lead to it on their own, and which do so by their very nature.”\textsuperscript{39} Beuvelet’s chief examples concerned situations in which people exposed themselves to sexual or sensual excess in quasi-public contexts, like household servants involved in an extra-marital affair of which the house’s masters were aware, people who looked at sexually suggestive pictures, or women who wore low-cut dresses.\textsuperscript{40} Plays followed right behind, along with gambling, bars, and obscene novels. Beuvelet accordingly advised confessors to refuse absolution to “Those who, recognizing that dances, plays or acrobats are situations that cause them normally to fall into sins of impurity, do not want to abstain from going.”\textsuperscript{41} Actors constituted a next occasion of sin, and so did inadequate priests.

Even though Rituals refrained from calling poorly performing priests public sinners, bishops who promoted ecclesiastical perfection directed more attention to scandalous priests than to actors. The bishops at a conference held in the Episcopal castle of Cahors in 1649, for example, spent an entire day discussing “the care that we are obliged to take to regulate our

\textsuperscript{36}Pavillon, Les Instructions du rituel du diocese d’Alet, 133: (“A cela se reduisent aussi certaines personnes publiques, comme sont les curez; les juges, les medecins, les apotiquaires, les chirurgiens, qui notoirement ne sont pas capables de leurs charges & de leurs emplois; ce qui fait qu’ils sont exposez à un danger continuel de faire des fautes, & des injustices notables, & qu’ils sont par consequent dans l’occasion prochaine du peche”).

\textsuperscript{37}Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 259. “What is the fifth case in which the Confessor must refuse Absolution? It is public scandal.” (“Quel est le cinquiémes cas auquel le Confesseur doit refuser l’Absolution? C’est le scandale public”).

\textsuperscript{38}“Who are the scandalous people to which, for reason of their scandals, it is necessary to refuse Absolution? All those who make for others situations of offenses…” See Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 259: (“Quelles sont les personnes scandaleuses ausquelles à raison de leurs scandales il faut refuser l’Absolution?” “Tous ceux qui font occasion aux autres d’offenses…”).

\textsuperscript{39}Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 154: (“Ce sont toutes les choses qui en peuvent estre les causes, ou bien qu’elles y portent d’elles mesmes, & qu’elles sont telles de leur nature”).

\textsuperscript{40}Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 154–155: (“Ce sont toutes les choses qui en peuvent estre les causes, ou bien qu’elles y portent d’elles mesmes, & qu’elles sont telles de leur nature, par exemple, tenir une femme chez soy avec laquelle on peche, garder des mauvais livres, des tableaux lascifs, porter la gorge nuë…”).

\textsuperscript{41}Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 156: (“Ceux qui reconnaissans que les danses, les comedies, ou basteleurs, seroient occasion de tomber ordinairement dans des pechez d’impureté, ne voudroient s’abstenir d’y aller”); The Ritual of Alet was even more explicit. See Pavillon, Les Instructions du rituel du diocese d’Alet, 132: “In the fifth place, those who frequent balls and plays, where they commit ordinarily many sins of impurity, like bad desires, dirty thoughts, lustful glances, and dishonest fondling. And when they do not commit such great sins, the peril to which they expose themselves to commit them must lead Confessors to prohibit these dangerous entertainments.” (“En cinquième lieu ceux qui frequentent les bals & les comedies, où ils commettent ordinairement plusieurs pechez d’impureté, comme mauvais desirs, pensées sales, regards lascifs, & attouchemens deshonnestes. Et quand ils n’y auroient pas commis de si grands pechez, le peril où ils s’exposent de le commettre, doit porter les Confesseurs à leur defendre ces divertissements dangereux”).
Clergy, and methods for succeeding.”⁴² They considered poorly performing priests to be perpetrators of public sin, and recommended public punishment:

If the faults are great, public and scandalous, and if one does not judge that the reprehension given by yourself suffices for their correction or for the satisfaction of the public, you must make them go to trial, and no longer suffer their visits, nor entry into our houses, until they have mended their ways. This repudiation will render them desppicable and force them to think of their reform, experience having shown that such repudiations produce many fruits, and cause big conversions.⁴³

Pavillon and other counter-reformers like him in fact considered a priest’s sins as worse than those of a lay public sinner. At an ecclesiastical conference held in the diocese of Alet, they declared, “If the sins of Christians appeared so grievous in the previous lesson, those of Ecclesiastics are without comparison even more so … and they will be punished more harshly both because of the great enormity of their sins and because they will be punished for the sins of the public in which they participated.”⁴⁴ Not only did parish priests who could not or would not strive for perfection slip into criminality, their ecclesiastical peers held them responsible for the sins of the public to which they ministered. For a curé of a parish that housed a theater, the public sins of the actors in his parish were his sins too.

The ideal of a perfect churchman expressed the secular clergy’s desire to improve their place in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Priests in religious orders – who in general received more training than a secular priest because they had to pass through a novitiate – had a better reputation for religious skill as well as for holiness. As Furetière noted in his Dictionnaire universel, “Regulars claim that their state is more perfect than that of the Seculars.”⁴⁵ In their quest for ecclesiastical perfection, the secular clergy sought to surpass the regular clergy. The secular clergy asserted that their perfection had greater merit than a regular clergyman’s because a regular pursued perfection in private. The stereotypical religious against which seminarians learned to compare themselves lived in a monastery and he did not have responsibility for the laity’s salvation. As Bourdoise put it, “Monks save themselves by fleeing, whereas Clerics by fighting. Monks are chaste because they are removed from temptations, whereas Clerics must be so in the midst of temptations. Monks are poor by a vow and have nothing, whereas Clerics must

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⁴² “Entretiens de la retraite faite à Alet,” The year of the retreat at Alet is not noted. However, it was likely prior to 1656 since the remainder of the manuscript seems to be compiled chronologically and contains an episcopal conference from Cahor dated 1649 and a conference from Pamier dated 1655-1656, n.d., f. 195, Ms. 195, SS. The full conference session title reads: (“Septeme scænce tenue le matin quinzeme Octobre en laquelle a e sté traité du soin que nó sommes obligés de prendre pour bien regler nostre Clergé et des moyens d’y resussir”).

⁴³ “Entretiens de la retraite faite a Alet (SS Ms. 195),” 395v: (“Se les fautes sont grandes, publiques et scandaleuses, et qu’on ne juge pas que la reprehension faite par soy mesme suffise, et pour leur correction et pour la satisfaction du public, il leur faut faire leur procès, et ne souffrir plus leurs visites, ny l’entrée dans nos maisons, qu’ils ne se soient amendés. Ce rebut les rendra meprisables et les contraindra de songer a leur amendement, l’expérience nous ayant fait voir que tels rebus produisent plusieurs fruits, et causent de grandes conversions”).

⁴⁴ “Entretiens de la retraite faite a Alet (SS Ms. 195),” 313v: (“Si les pechés des chrestiens ont parus si griefs dans l’entretien precedent; ceux des Ecclesiastiques le sont sans comparaison davantage... et ils seront punis plus grievement, tant a raison de la plus grande enormité de leurs pechés que parce qu’ils seront punis pour les pechés du public auxquels ils ont participé.”

be so without vows and in the midst of riches.”

Secular clergymen, by contrast, had to achieve their perfection in front of the world and for the world’s benefit: publicly, and for public ends. The directors of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice proposed that secular clergymen think of themselves as belonging to a religious order of which God was the superior general because a secular clergyman had to undertake public ministry just like Jesus ministered “visibly” when he was in the world:

Clerics must consider themselves like the Religious of our Lord because they are in a state in which they must profess his cult in private and in which they are under an obligation to publicly render Him the essential duties of Religion.

In reality, many regular clergymen exercised their functions publicly. Regular priests obtained benefices and Episcopalian seats, and the chapels run by religious orders—which often offered better ceremonies in nicer buildings—drew laity away from their own parish churches. “Parish Priests ... cannot and should not complain about the usurpation of the Regulars,” cautioned Bourdoise, “the fault is their own...” For clergymen who did not belong to religious orders, constructing appropriate publicness consequently had high institutional stakes. When they failed, they lost not only their reputations but also ecclesiastical offices, religious authority, and lay attendance to the better-trained regulars.

Costumes

Clerical robes served as a key mechanism for advancing the secular clergy’s professionalization. As the material lynchpin for priestly identity during the Catholic Counter-Reformation, clerical robes enabled secular churchmen to mediate between conflicting types of publicness so as to construct an appropriate style of priestly self-display. Robes made secular priests public by making them easily identifiable. This visibility enhanced ceremonial activity and archival activity in equal measure, facilitating the production of splendor on the one hand while legitimizing a priest’s role as the parish record-keeper on the other. And yet, clerical robes also inspired anxiety about the difference between true and false priests. Was a man in clerical attire a priest by divine calling or merely a fraud? Was his robe an authentic sign or a deceptive costume? The possibility that a man who wore clerical robes might be playing a role or hiding worldly intentions likened priests to actors. To craft himself as a public person, a priest had to differentiate himself from an actor by producing evidence that his robe constituted an authentic mark rather than a disguise.

The portraits of Adrien Bourdoise (Figure 8) and Jean-Jacques Olier (Figure 9) – founders of the Seminaries of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet and of Saint-Sulpice respectively – depict the exterior features that by mid-century had become essential to the secular clergy’s

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49 Bourdoise, *L’Idée d’un bon ecclésiastique*, 76: (“Les Curez ... ne peuvent & ne doivent se plaindre de l’usurpation des Religieux, le mal ne vient que d’eux-mêmes ...”).
public appearance. Both men wear the tonsure, or a shaved circle at the crown of the head. They are dressed in an ankle-length, long-sleeved black clerical robe called the soutane – discernible in Bourdoise’s portrait near his neck and hands – covered by a shorter, white robe called a surplice. The soutane was the clerical garment par excellence, the robe that distinguished a cleric from a lay person as well as a secular clergyman from a religious. The surplice was the basic liturgical vestment, the robe worn by clerics in the church’s chancel and by a priest celebrating mass or administering the sacraments. Finally, they sport small collars. Seminary directors considered the size of a secular clergyman’s collar so important that the règlement for the prefect at Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet included a pattern according to which all seminarians’ collars had to be made. The pattern bore the title “Le véritable modèle des rabats du séminaire” (The true model of seminary collars). Their small collars, together with their facial expressions, denoted modesty, or the combined effect of personal behavior and physical appearance that resulted from obedience to ecclesiastical rules designed to bring a cleric’s exterior in line with what the seminary instructors called “the spirit of the Church.” The spirit of the Church, as expressed through a priest’s body, had acquired a precise form by the second half of the seventeenth century.

These robes made secular priests visible, publishing their presence. Churchmen and laity alike in the seventeenth century experienced the secular clergy’s visibility as new. Although ecclesiastical authorities had prescribed certain kinds of dress for secular churchmen since the twelfth century, as Louis Trichet shows in his study of clerical attire, before the late sixteenth century in France these codes usually concerned only clergymen who had already attained the “major” orders by becoming subdeacons, deacons or priests, which left the dress code for clergymen in “minor” orders – the first four ordinations leading toward the priesthood, namely, porter, lector, exorcist, and acolyte – open to greater variation. The large number of young men who entered the minor orders without continuing on to obtain the priesthood further compromised the secular clergy’s visibility during the period preceding the foundation of seminaries in France. Church historian Joseph Bergin asserts that “Probably at no time in European history was the distinction between lay society and the clergy in the broad sense as blurred as in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.” Families during this period habitually had their pre-teen boys seek ordination in minor orders, making their sons eligible to receive benefices and enjoy legal exemption from secular courts. This caused France’s clerical

50 The tonsure was also referred to as “une couronne,” or crown. For a history of this practice, see Trichet, *La Tonsure*. Bourdoise’s tonsure is difficult to see because of his receding hairline. Olier has his tonsure covered by a cap, which is just slightly larger than the tonsure. For a better view of a tonsure, see the portrait of Olier’s successor, Louis Tronson (Figure 3), which shows a wisp of hair at his forehead, behind which the entire crown of his head is shaved.


52 “Livre dans lequel ... (AN MM 475),” 248r.


55 Bergin, *Church, Society and Religious Change in France*, 64.

56 Bergin, *Church, Society and Religious Change in France*, 64.
population to swell in a way that made clergymen difficult to distinguish from the laity, both
because clerics in minor orders did not have to observe ecclesiastical dress codes with much
rigor and because the minor orders did not oblige a cleric to thereafter enter the major orders. An
acolyte, for example, could still leave the clergy to resume life as a layman, marrying and
pursuing some other profession. According to Bergin, in some dioceses as many as ten clerics
left the minor orders and returned to lay life upon reaching adulthood for every one cleric who
became a priest.

Nor did clergymen in major orders wear their robes consistently. When Bourdoise and
Olier began working to reform France’s clergy in the early seventeenth century, they complained
that secular churchmen either refused to wear their robes or modified their robe to suit secular
fashion trends. Bourdoise bemoaned:

You rarely see ecclesiastics who do not follow the world’s fashions in clothing, furniture,
and other things as swiftly as if there were a commandment to conform to them, but if it
is a question of obeying the Laws and Canons of the Church and of conforming to the
will and decrees that she imposes with such authority, one has to use threats of mortal sin,
of irregularity, of the privation of benefices... and even then few want to subject
themselves to [the Church’s decrees] and put them into practice.

Religious historian René Taveneaux writes, “Incorrect dress is often evoked in the synodal
ordinances or other Episcopal documents. Many parish priests dress like peasants, refusing to
wear the soutane or wearing a very short soutane – the soutanelle – that stopped at the knees.”
As a result, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries secular clergymen frequently
blended in with their parishioners. Seminaries, by contrast, made France’s secular churchmen
easier to see by training them to assiduously wear their clerical robes.

The soutane helped secular clergymen legitimize their visibility by creating continuity
between their functional and liturgical responsibilities, or between their use of writing and their
use of ceremonies. A secular clergyman’s robe announced – published – his stature as an official
who possessed a kind of authority akin to the king’s officers and legal agents. Bishops claimed
that a parish priest’s curial duties – especially those with a legal character like baptism, marriage,
burial, and the responsibility of publishing Episcopal and royal edicts from the pulpit – made him
a public person in the same way that according to Furetière a magistrate constituted a public
person. Furetière said of magistrates: “One also calls an officer ‘public,’ a public man, a
magistrate who takes care of justice...” In a Synodicon published in 1620 by Henri de Gondi,
bishop of Paris from 1598 to 1622, the Church used “public” in this way. Gondi insisted that

57 Bergin, Church, Society and Religious Change in France, 64.
58 Bergin, Church, Society and Religious Change in France, 64.
59 Bourdoise, L’Idée d’un bon ecclésiastique, 21: (“Vous ne voyez guere d’Ecclesiastiques, qui ne suivent aussi
promptement les modes du monde en habits, en meubles & autres choses, comme s’il y avoit commandement de s’y
conformer, mais est-il question d’obeyer aux Loix & Canons de l’Eglise, & de se conformer aux volontez &
Ordonnance qu’elles leur fait avec tant d’authorité, il y faut employer les menasses de peché mortel, d’irregularité,
de privation de Benefice... encore peu se trouvent-ils qui s’y veuillent assujettir, & les pratiquer”).
60 Taveneaux, Le Catholicisme dans la France classique, 1:138: (“L’incorrection vestimentaire est souvent évoquée
dans les ordonnances synodales ou dans d’autres documents épiscopaux. Beaucoup de curés s’habitent comme des
paysans, se refusent à porter la soutane ou portent une soutane très courte – la soutanelle – s’arrêtant aux genoux”).
61 Furetière, “Public”: (“On appelle aussi un Officer public, un homme public, un Magistrat qui a soin de la
justice...”).
because vicars, like parish priests, were public persons, only he, as the bishop, could authorize someone to exercise their functions:

And because the Vicars who are chosen to support Parish Priests in the curial functions are public persons … no one will assume this quality or exercise the functions of Vicar in our Diocese without having received from us proper and authentic Letters of the Vicariate.\(^\text{62}\)

By reclaiming for vicars the authority associated with public personhood, Henri de Gondi in fact asserted that such an authority belonged both to parish priests and their representatives. The soutane reinforced Gondi’s claim that parish priests constituted public persons by making priests resemble magistrates. In an Episcopal conference from the second half of the seventeenth century on “The regulation of churchmen regarding their exterior,” the bishops in attendance cited magistrates as a motive for adopting vestimentary norms for clergymen, noting that priests should wear the soutane “Following the example of people of the world, specifically Magistrates, who do not ordinarily make their appearance except with the soutane.”\(^\text{63}\) The soutane made secular clergymen visible while simultaneously legitimizing this visibility by assimilating it to that of a public functionary.

Liturgically, too, the soutane facilitated appropriate publicness. Liturgical publicness, founded on éclat or what Habermas calls an aura of authority, depended on obscuring a priest’s particularity so as to absorb him into the one great corporate body forged by the ceremonies of the mass. The soutane furthered the clergyman’s absorption into a ceremonial body by obscuring his individual body. Since the soutane stretched to the heels and the wrists, it left only a clergyman’s face and hands exposed.\(^\text{64}\) In Olier’s words, the soutane “envelopes the entire body and leaves nothing to see except under a garment of death.”\(^\text{65}\) The coutumier for the seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet – a manuscript collection of the community’s rules, policies, and decisions – specified that the soutane had to reach the ground and be as closed as possible:

According to Mr. Bourdoise and according to the customs of the Community, the soutane’s length must be neither too long nor too short, and must never drag on the ground. It must be … closed in front with buttons only to the middle, the rest of the soutane sewn to the bottom.\(^\text{66}\)

\(^{62}\) Henri de Gondi’s synodal acts from 1620 were republished by François de Harlay de Champvallon, the fifth archbishop of Paris. See Francisci de Harlay, Synodicon ecclesiae parisiensis (Parisii: Apud. Franciscum Muguet Regis & illustrissimi Archiepiscopi Parisiensis Typographum, 1674), 402: (“Et pource que les Vicaires qui sont choisis pour secourir les Curez és fonctions curiales, sont personnes publiques … nul ne prendra la qualité ny n’exercera les fonctions de Vicaire en nostre Dioce se, sans avoir pris de nous des Lettres de Vicariat en bonne forme & authentiques”). Emphasis mine.

\(^{63}\) “Conférences épiscopales, BN Ms. Fr. 14428,” 121r–122v: (“Entretien du Reglement des Ecclesiastiques quant a l’exterieur,” “A l’exemple de gens du monde, nommement des Magistrats qui ne paroissent autrement pour l’ordinaire, qu’avec la lotane”). This conference is not dated, but is bound with conferences from 1649 and 1656.

\(^{64}\) Trichet, Le Costume du clergé, 130–133.

\(^{65}\) Chaillot, Cochois, and Noye, Traité des Saints Ordres (1676), compare aux écrits authentiques de Jean-Jacques Olier (†1657), 77: (“environne tout leur corps, et qui ne laisse rien voir d’eux que sous un habit de mort”).

\(^{66}\) “Règlements du séminaire de Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet (AN MM 476),” 339v: (“Selon Mr. Bourdoise et selon l’usage de la Communauté La Soutanne ne doit estre pour la longuer ni trop longue, ni trop courte, ni jamais trainante. Elle doit estre faicte sans arrieres points, et fermée par le devant avec des boutons seulement jusqu’au milieu, le reste de la soutane coustie jusqu’au bas”).
The soutane’s neutrality – simple, black, and long – assimilated a priest to a servant who downplayed his own particularity in order to participate in God’s “surroundings.” The same bishops who compared the soutane to a magistrate’s robe compared, in their next meeting, the clergymen who wore a soutane while attending mass to a servant waiting on a noble. A servant “who had linens more beautiful and more white, and clothes more honest than his master would not be acting with civility toward him,” they reasoned. A servant should not outshine the master. Rather, a servant should extend the master’s aura. When worn during mass, the soutane’s simplicity augmented the divine majesty’s éclat. The soutane therefore symbolized the secular clergy’s changing sense of itself by mediating between functional and liturgical publicness, adding gravitas to situations in which a clergyman used writing to regulate, discipline, or record parish life in his role as public official, while also neutralizing a clergyman’s personal features and physical idiosyncrasies so that he could enhance the mass’s aura of authority without drawing attention to himself.

And yet, the secular clergy’s attire, by making secular churchmen more visible as a clerical type, also aroused suspicions that the person underneath the robe might be playing a role, that a clergyman’s robes might in fact be a costume. The collar worn by secular clergymen typified the thin line that separated a priest’s professional self-presentation from an actor’s costumed role-playing. By the end of the seventeenth century, according to Furetière, the phrase “little collar” doubled as slang for hypocrite:

One calls ‘Little collar’ a man who has joined himself to the reform, to devotion, because out of modesty people of the Church wear small collars, whereas people of the world wear big ones adorned with points and lace. And sometimes it is said in a bad way of hypocrites who assume modest manners, especially by wearing a small collar.

Theater scholars will recognize the priestly type discernible in the portraits of Bourdoise and Olier – and especially their small collars – thanks to George Couton’s introduction to Molière’s parody of false devotion, *Le Tartuffe ou l’imposteur*, first performed on May 12, 1664 at the Palace of Versailles. The play featured a character named Tartuffe whose professed zeal for the Christian faith wins him the respect of a bourgeois named Orgon. Orgon welcomed Tartuffe into his home, while Tartuffe proceeded to try to seduce Orgon’s wife. Couton deduces the key features of the costume worn by Tartuffe in 1664 based on adjustments made by Molière for a new run of the play in 1667 under the revised title *Panulphe, ou l’imposteur*. Molière described Panulphe’s costume in a request for protection for his play, addressed to Louis XIV, in which he lamented that, “In vain I produced it under the title *The Imposter*, and disguised the character under the adjustment of a man of the world; to no effect I gave him a small hat, big hair, a large

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67 “Conférences épiscopales, BN Ms. Fr. 14422,” 127r: (“comme un serviteur qui auroit du linge plus beau, plus blanc, et des habits plus honnestes que son maistre, qui ne garderoit pas civilité vers luy”).
68 See “Collet” in Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel*: (“En ce sens on appelle Petit collet, un homme qui s’est mis dans la reforme, dans la devotion, parce que les gens d’Eglise portent par modestie de petits collets, tandis que les gens du monde en portent de grands ornés de points & de dentelles. Et quelquefois il se dit en mauvaise part des hypocrites qui affectent des manieres modestes, & sur tout de porter un petit collet”).
69 The first performance of *Le Tartuffe* was one of many entertainments that occupied Louis XIV’s court during the days following a three-day celebration called the Plaisirs de l’île enchantée (Pleasures of the Enchanted Isle). These celebrations inaugurated Louis XIV’s recently renovated palace. See Molière, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Georges Couton, vol. 1 (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1971), 739–740.
collar, a sword, and lace all over his clothes…” Couton infers that the original costume entailed the opposite garb: “a big hat, short hair, a small collar, no sword, and clothes without lace.” Couton correctly notes, “normally distinguished a young man who intended to make a career in the Church.” In fact, he hypothesizes that even if Molière had not been so bold as to put Tartuffe in a soutane, a small collar alone would have been sufficient to signal the lead character’s clerical status. “We believe that Molière only put him in a little collar,” writes Couton. As the polemic that swirled around Molière’s play suggests, more than one devout Frenchman interpreted Tartuffe as a clergyman. Most notably, a parish priest named Pierre Roullé asserted that Tartuffe showed “scorn for all the Church, and disregard for the most sacred character and the most divine function … ordered by the Savior for the sanctification of souls.” Molière’s play touched a nerve by staging, among other things, the tenuous distinction between clerical garments as authentic sign versus misleading disguise. The controversy that embroiled the play provides just one example of the pitfalls that accompanied priestly publicness: As professionalization made secular clergymen more visible, it also made them easier to parody.

Furetière’s remark about small collars – and Molière’s probable use of a “petit collet” to signal Tartuffe’s hypocrisy – exposed just one aspect of a performance problem that the secular clergy encountered daily in their efforts to professionalize, that of interpreting the soutane as a sign of priestly vocation. This performance problem permeated the rite in which a man first acquired his priestly robes, called the tonsure. The tonsure created clerics who possessed a liminal status, perched on the threshold between the laity and the clergy. Cardinal Bellarmin compared the tonsure rite to a doorway. Anyone who had passed through it was considered a cleric: “Of all these orders, the Tonsure marches in front, which is like the door to all the other Orders, and this one strictly speaking makes Clerics.” Once tonsured, a man belonged to the clergy – the community of ecclesiastics in its broadest sense – but stood just barely inside the door to the priesthood. He could obtain ecclesiastical benefices and enjoyed the clergy’s exemption from civil law, but he had not yet attained even the first of the minor orders. Bishops

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and seminary directors enforced ecclesiastical norms for clerical dress by regulating the tonsure rite. Whereas in previous centuries a tonsured cleric might not even have bothered with clerical attire, starting in the early seventeenth century the priests who also advanced the foundation of seminaries campaigned to make sure that clergymen began observing clerical dress codes as soon as they received the tonsure. Although on the one hand, as already discussed, the standardization of clerical attire improved the secular clergy’s professional standing, on the other hand the imposition of a strict dress code potentially increased the number of men who looked like priests but did not act like perfect ecclesiastics. Bishops and seminary directors consequently began to vigilantly evaluate clergymen for their religious authenticity in the context of the tonsure rite.

Reforms made to the tonsure rite by Bourdoise in Paris in the 1620s had a particularly lasting influence on the physical appearance of French clergymen. In 1621 Bourdoise convinced Paris’ “parish priests and best preachers” to give a sermon about the rite of tonsure and holy orders on the Sunday of Quatre-Temps, the period of fasting and abstinence that commenced the Christmas season, and in 1623 he published a small handbook to help candidates prepare for the tonsure, titled Le désireux de parvenir salutairement à l’estat ecclésiastique, se faisant instruire des propres moyens d’y arriver (A person who desires to become an ecclesiastic in the right way, seeking instruction about the proper methods). Written as a dialogue between a young man who wants to become a priest – le Désireux – and an experienced priest who guides him through the tonsure preparation – le Maître – the handbook’s form and content provide an idea of how Bourdoise might have interacted with the aspiring clergymen he trained. By 1627, Bourdoise’s efforts in and around Paris had persuaded the new Archbishop, Jean-François de Gondi, to institute a rigorous pre-tonsure examination in Paris. He selected two young theologians as the examiners, both of whom were Bourdoise’s “disciples.” The following year, in 1628, the Archbishop decided the examination had had such positive results that he issued a decree (mandement) obliging all future tonsure candidates to submit themselves to the exam, and in 1630 he printed the tonsure rules in the new Ritual for his diocese, with the added requirement that parish priests read the rules out loud to their congregations on the Sunday before Ember days.

The tonsure rite exemplified the performance problem intrinsic to professionalization because the rite involved a sort of authorized role-playing designed to enable the bishop and his examiners to distinguish “true” candidates from imposters, or in the words of Bourdoise’s handbook “those who have a true desire to live clerically” from those who did not. The rite thus entailed the sort of discernment Molière claimed to have used in writing his Tartuffe. “[I] applied all the art and all the care that I could so as to clearly distinguish the character of the...

77 Their names were Monsieur Le Feron and Monsieur Duchesne le jeune. See Descourveaux, La vie de monsieur Bourdoise, 255.
79 See the preface in Bourdoise, Le désireux, á: (“Ceui qui aurót un vray desir de vivre Cleralement”).
hypocrite from that of a true dévot,” he stated in his play’s preface. In order to receive the tonsure, candidates had to arrive at the cathedral on the day of the rite already dressed as clerics. This meant that they walked through their neighborhoods on the appointed day dressed as clergymen without yet actually occupying that status. They had to arrive carrying a lit candle in their right hand, wearing a soutane with their hair cut short and the tonsure – or small circle of exposed skin – already in place, and carrying a surplice over one arm, with which the bishop would vest him during the rite. If a candidate did not properly assume the outer appearance of his desired future self before the rite, he could not enter the clergy. He had to perform his future clerical self in order to officially receive it from the bishop.

The bishop and his examiners, in turn, had no other way to discern true candidates from false ones except by scrutinizing each candidate’s presentation of self in search of behaviors that signaled either artifice or sincerity. When the examiners interrogated a candidate before the rite, they evaluated six criteria. The first four of these an examiner could ascertain through tests – had the candidate received the sacrament of confirmation, did he know the basic tenets of the faith, could he read, and could he write – but the last two concerned the candidate’s performance of a clerical identity. Examiners had to determine whether a candidate’s actions gave “probable conjecture of not choosing this type of life fraudulently,” and whether he showed signs that he sincerely desired to serve God. In Bourdoise’s handbook, the Désireux, or candidate, admits that both for the candidate and the examiners the process of determining sincerity seemed problematic. “I do not understand how one can give probable conjecture of using the Clericature properly, and how the examiners would know whether we would probably abuse it,” he tells his Maître, or teacher. The Maître replies with full confidence that the examiners can detect fraud:

It is easy for them to recognize by diverse methods, because first they consider if the responses given [by the candidate] demonstrate that he applies with zeal and a fervent desire to serve God, if he has thought about what it is, if he has been informed about it,


82 As the secular clergy’s archival skills improved, bishops tried to guard against the possibility that a skilled performer could fraudulently produce the effects of sincerity by punctuating the examination process for the tonsure with more documentation. Tonsure candidates had to present a “testimony of morals” to the examiners along with evidence that the candidate had had banns published in his home parish announcing his intention to join the priesthood. Examiners, in turn, gave the candidate a signed document indicating whether or not they had deemed him capable of attaining holy orders. See for example Hardouin de Perefixe, Mandement de Monseigneur l’illustissime et reverendissime Hardouin de Perefixe, archevesque de Paris, pour ceux qui desirent estre promeus aux saints ordres (Paris: Chez François Muguet, Imprimeur & Libraire ordinaire du Roy, & de Monseigneur l’Archevesque de Paris, rue de la Harpe, à l’Adoration des trois Roys, 1664).

83 Bourdoise, Le désireux, 49–50: (“bonne conjecture de ne choisir ce genre de vie en fraude”).

84 Bourdoise, Le désireux, 52–53: (“je n’entens pas comment l’on peut donner la probable conjecture de bien user de la Clericature, & en quoy les examineurs coignissent probablement qu’on en pourra abuser”).
and if he has already acquired some of the virtues like humility, obedience, devotion, contempt for himself and for the world and its vanities.  

The Maître’s next sentence, however, betrays the difficulty of differentiating sincere candidates from pretenders. “Afterward,” says the teacher, the examiners “consider and brood about whether there was any hypocrisy or simulation…” In order to escape the charge of hypocrisy or simulation, the candidate had to make his performance convincing. He had to perform his future self in a way that conveyed what sociologist Erving Goffman calls “belief in the part one is playing.” The candidate’s behavior had to convince other churchmen that he, the candidate, “believe[d] in the impression fostered by [his] own performance.” Meanwhile, although examiners prided themselves on identifying what Goffman would call “cynical” performers – those clerics who “ha[d] no belief in [their] own act” nor “ultimate concern with the beliefs of [their] audience” – the bishop and his examiners had little protection against truly skilled performers, like actors, who could produce the signs of sincerity without believing in the part they played.

The soutane and shaved head were supposed to testify to the veracity of the candidate’s intentions. The Maître explains that wearing the soutane constituted a sign that the candidate did not dissimulate his desire to enter the clergy. He tells his pupil:

This probable conjecture is manifested and examined when they [the candidates] … have the Crown, clerical robe, surplice, and burning candle to present yourself to receive the Tonsure. Likewise having a firm intention to wear the clerical robe perpetually…

The confidence expressed by the Maître in Bourdoise’s early-seventeenth-century handbook that a candidate who wore a soutane could not be a hypocrite derived in part from an attitude toward clothing that was already eroding by the late seventeenth century. Renaissance scholars Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass call this attitude “investiture.” “For it was investiture,” they write, “the putting on of clothes, that quite literally constituted a person as a monarch or a free man of a guild or a household servant. Investiture was, in other words, the means by which a person was given a form, a shape, a social function, a ‘depth.’” Approximately thirty years later, however, clergymen who resisted the soutane gave reasons that made the soutane sound much more like a costume than a garment that gave depth to a churchman’s form, shape, and social function, even though seminary directors continued to insist that the soutane could and should “invest” clergymen with an authentic identity. In the Episcopal conference on “The regulation of churchmen regarding their exterior,” the bishops in attendance listed the three top reasons churchmen failed to wear clerical robes. The first was discomfort and the second was

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85 Bourdoise, Le désirieux, 53: (“Cela leur est facile à reconnoistre par divers moyens. Car premiermenet ils consi-derent, si les reponses qu’on leur faict sont de postuler la Clericature avec zele & fervent desir de servir Dieu, si l’on a pensé ce que c’est, si l’on en a esté informé, & si l’on a ja quelques vertus acquises, comme de l’humilité, de l’obeyssance, de la devotion, du mespris tant de soy-mesme, que du monde, & de ses vanitez”).
86 Bourdoise, Le désirieux, 53: (“Par apres l’on considere & rumine, s’il n’y a point d’hypocrisie & de simulation...”).
87 Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, 17.
88 Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, 18.
89 Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, 18.
90 Bourdoise, Le désirieux, 54–55: (“Cet probable conjecture est manifeste és examinez, lors qu’ils ... [ont] Couronne, habit clericale, surpels, & chandele ardante pour se presenter à recevoire la Tonsure. Item ayant ferme propos de porter perpetuellement l’habit clerical...”).
fear of mockery. To wear the soutane churchmen had to defy fashion and position themselves as adversaries of the self-presentational codes by means of which nobles displayed their wealth and status through clothing. Many thus experienced the soutane not as investiture but as divestment.

To differentiate the soutane from a costume, bishops and seminary directors promoted habits in keeping with an investiture attitude toward clothes. First and foremost, ecclesiastical authorities figured the soutane as a second skin rather than a disguise by requiring secular clergy to wear their robes continuously. A costume that never comes off becomes truer than whatever it covers. Seminary directors expressed this investiture attitude by referring to the soutane in terms that treated the garment as part of the clergyman who wore it; as a “mark,” a “profession,” and a “testimony.” Meanwhile, Episcopal commandments and seminary rules made wearing the soutane mandatory. In 1673 and 1697, the archbishops of Paris issued decrees imposing the soutane’s perpetual use, even when at home. Louis Antoine de Noailles’ decree stated:

We prohibit all Ecclesiastics in sacred orders and all those who occupy a benefice from ever appearing in public except with the tonsure according to their Orders and with hair short and modest, and we command them to always wear the soutane in their residence…

Although the archbishop permitted young clerics who were students to wear the shorter version of the soutane called the soutanelle on weekdays, seminaries required all clergymen to wear the soutane all the time. The rules for the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice instructed seminarians to put on the soutane immediately upon rising in the morning “so as to not be seen without this robe,” warning them “you must not ever appear in the hallway or even stand in the doorway or in front of the window of your room if you are not entirely dressed.” By wearing the soutane continuously, secular clergy eliminated occasions that would draw attention to a churchman’s robes as artifacts distinct from his body, while also minimizing opportunities for

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92 “Conférences épiscopales, BN Ms. Fr. 14428,” 121r: (“Entretien du Reglement des Ecclesiastiques quant a l’exterieur”). This conference is not dated, but is bound with conferences from 1649 and 1656.
93 An anonymous handbook from the mid-seventeenth century states, “The soutane is the garment of the religion of Jesus Christ by which we make an outer profession that we dress ourselves in the religion of Jesus toward his father”. See “Marques de vocation à l’estat ecclésiastique”, before 1676, f. 9, Ms. 163, SS: (“La soutane est l’habit de la religion de J. C. par lequel nous faisons profession exterieurement de nous revestir interieurement de la religion de Jesus envers son pere”); According to Olier, “Et pour cela il prend l’habit de la très sainte Religion en prenant la soutane, pour témoign qu’il commence à faire profession de la Religion chrétienne”).
94 Louis Antoine de Noailles, *Ordonnance de Monseigneur l’archevesque de Paris touchant l’habit & la conduite exterieure des ecclesiastiques* (Paris: Chez Louis Josse, Imprimeur de Monseigneur l’Archeveque, rue S. Jacques, 1697), 5: (“Nous defendons à tous Ecclesiastiques dans les Ordres sacrés, & à tous Beneficiers, de paraître en public qu’avec la tonsure suivant leurs Ordres, & qu’avec des cheveux courts & modestes; & leur ordonnons de porter toujours la Soutane dans le lieu de leur résidence…”). Noailles specifies that his predecessor had issued the same decree.
95 Regarding the soutanelle for students, see Noailles, *Ordonnance de Monseigneur l’archevesque de Paris touchant l’habit & la conduite exterieure des ecclesiastiques*, 5.
96 “Reglement général du Séminaire de S. Sulpice (BN Ms. Fr. 11760),” 105v–106r: (“afin de ne pas se voir sans cet habit,” “On ne doit jamais paraître dans le corridor ni même se présenter à la porte ou devant la fenêtre de sa chambre qu’on ne soit entierement habillé”).
the laity to think of clergymen as people who possessed a life apart from their ecclesiastical roles. Worn perpetually, the soutane served as the clerical body’s outermost layer.

The secular clergy’s habits of investiture – their perpetual wearing of the soutane – safeguarded against the idea that a priest, like an actor, dressed up in a disguise. The soutane’s perpetual use inverted the logic of the costume. The logic that guided Furetière’s definition of the “little collars” as hypocrites, for example, asserted that the “little collars” put on a religiously significant piece of clothing in order to play a role. The religious garment hid their true nature. Seminary’s taught the opposite. For Bourdoise, a clergymen could be said to wear a costume only when he did not wear the soutane. “We are in a time of perpetual Carnival,” his sayings record Bourdoise as complaining, “where most men are in masquerade, Churchmen disguise themselves in the clothes of laymen, and laymen brazenly usurp the clothing and ornaments of Churchmen, as one can see everywhere in Paris…”

A cleric who refused to don the soutane, according to ecclesiastical logic, wore a disguise. A pamphlet titled *Des clercs desguisez: Ou de l’habit clerical, selon les saints canons* (Disguised clerics: Or clerical dress according to the holy canons) lambasted “These Sirs who say everywhere that they can do their hair and dress according to the style (*bienseance*) of the age,” and asserted that these stylish clerics “for the most part are ... Courtesans, gamblers, traveling entertainers (baladins), hunters...” in other words pleasure seekers and entertainers, maybe even actors. According to seminary directors, the cleric who dissembled his true identity and therefore behaved like an actor was not the secular clergyman dressed in his soutane but rather the priest who removed it. Beware the clergymen in street clothes, warned seminary directors, he is the one playing a role. He is the real Tartuffe.

**Audience**

In the same way that the adjective “public” applied to actors because they performed in front of audiences, part of a secular clergymen’s public personhood derived from the fact that he exercised his sacramental and pastoral responsibilities before an assembly of worshippers. This exposure to the lay gaze imparted publicness. In order to differentiate his public personhood from an actor’s public “sin,” a priest had to structure his relationship to the assembled faithful such that he performed with, among, and on behalf of his parishioners rather than to them or for them. To preserve the positive valence of his public status, a clergymen had to make sure that the assembled worshippers did not act like spectators as the theater. The mass and preaching presented priests with the two situations during which the assembled faithful had the greatest propensity to function like a theater audience. Early modern theater audiences were by no means uniform or predictable. Pierre Mélèse has shown how spectators showed off for each other and how their reactions to plays varied from praise to scorn. For the eighteenth century, Pierre Lagrave and Jeffrey Ravel have analyzed the

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100 Mittman, *Spectators on the Paris Stage in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. 
demographics of theater audiences, excavated their raucous behavior, and discerned the political intent that the audience’s activity may have expressed. More than anything, though, early moderns considered the theater audience a “public” because it possessed the capacity to critique the play and its performers. Under the entry for “public” in the second edition of Furetière’s *Dictionnaire universel*, his editors added two citations that figure the public in its substantive form as a judge. “However disparaged the public might be,” reads the first, “there is not a more incorruptible judge and sooner or later it renders justice.” “The public is an inexorable judge that should be handled better than it is,” reads the second. From a clerical perspective, the people who attended masses and sermons began acting like an audience when they critiqued the way priests conducted the sacraments or preached. Judgment converted worshippers into spectators.

The faithful who gathered at masses and sermons could easily take on the characteristics of an audience because priests executed these responsibilities from spaces that the laity could not enter but that placed clergymen on display. Physical distance positioned worshippers as spectators and gave them a space from which to pass critique on the clergymen performing in front of them. Priests conducted mass at an altar raised by as many as seven steps located in a rectangular area reserved for clergymen but visible to worshippers. During the medieval period a wall or screen called a *jubé* had frequently separated this ecclesiastical space, called the chancel, from the area in which the laity attended mass. However, in the seventeenth century as churches began to remove their *jubés* not only did the chancel increasingly resemble a performance space, but the remaining structure could even give the impression of a proscenium arch, as demonstrated by the steps and cross beam that survived from the *jubé* at the parish church of Sainte-Étienne-du-Mont in Paris (Figure 11). The frontispiece for an early eighteenth-century liturgical textbook by Pierre Le Brun – the same professor from the Seminary of Saint-Magloire who wrote lectures against the theater at the end of the seventeenth century – evokes the spectator-like nature of the worshippers who attended a mass (Figure 12). In the engraving the faithful who attend a mass watch as clergymen conduct ceremonies on the raised platform in front of them.

Like the open chancel, pulpits positioned priests as performers while figuring the faithful as spectators. A typical pulpit in the seventeenth century resembled a tiny stage or scaffold big enough for just one person. The plans for the pulpit at the parish church Saint-Nicolas du

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102 Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel, contenant généralement tous les mots François tant vieux que modernes, & les termes des sciences et des arts...,* vol. 2 (La Haye et Rotterdam: chez Arnoud et Reinier Leers, 1702), 625, http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5795138h: (“Quelque décrié que soit le public, il n’y a pas de Juge plus incorruptible, & tôt ou tard il rend justice”). The citation is from Boileau.

103 Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel*, 2:625: (“Le public est un juge inexorable, qu’il faudroit menager plus qu’on ne fait”). The dictionary attributes the citation to an author named Bell.

104 Chédozeau, *Chœur clos, chœur ouvert*, 13–43.

105 The jube at the church of Sainte-Étienne-du-Mont was built before 1541. In 1735 and 1740 the parishioners considered destroying it, but decided not to. See Maurice Dumolin and George Outardel, *Les Églises de France: Paris et la Seine* (Paris: Libraire Letouzey et Ané, 1936), 110–111; According to Eugène Emmanuel Violet-le-Duc, the jubes in parish churches often framed the altar because the jube was not covered by a screen or cloister. See Eugène Emmanuel Violet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné de l’architecture française du Xle au XVle siècle*, vol. 3 (Paris: Ernest Gründ, 1924), 237.
Chardonnet – its design attributed to Charles Le Brun (1619-1690), who Louis XIV had named First Painter to His Majesty – shows the various components of a pulpit, which usually consisted of a platform affixed to a pillar in the nave (Figure 13). The preacher ascended to the altar via a flight of stairs that encircled the pillar. A decorative roof, which served to amplify the preacher’s voice, topped the platform. In some cases, as an engraving by the artist and designer Jean Le Pautre (1618-1682) demonstrates, pulpits even had curtains from behind which the preacher would emerge (Figure 14). In the engraving, an auditor peeks from behind the curtain as the preacher orates. Another engraving by Le Pautre shows auditors gathered around the base of the pulpit and leaning over balustrades above it in order to better see and hear the priest preaching from it (Figure 15). Pulpits raised priests above their parishioners and framed them like performers.

In the same way that skilled actors attracted audiences, priests who performed the sacraments beautifully or preached well could attract worshippers to a parish. In both regards, priests in religious orders typically had an advantage and secular clergymen consequently fretted that their parishioners attended services at nearby chapels rather than in the parish church. Bourdoise insisted to his seminarians and fellow secular clergymen that to compete with the religious, secular priests had to excel in their functions. “There is only one remedy for keeping the People from leaving their parishes to go elsewhere ... that is to make sure that there are good priests in the parishes,” states one of his maxims. P. Schoenher, author of a history about Bourdoise’s seminary, believes that the parish church of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet to which the seminary was connected experienced a rise in attendance when Bourdoise and his community of churchmen began helping the curé to conduct masses and administer the sacraments. In 1612, the same year that Bourdoise arrived in the parish, the parish purchased a plot of land contiguous to the church so as to enlarge its building, possibly to accommodate more worshippers. The author of Bourdoise’s Vie also claims that attendance in the parish increased. “The people were agreeably surprised to see a greater number of ecclesiastics and started to come more often to the parish, where the Office was performed with all the regularity and piety possible,” writes Philibert Descourveaux. As seminary training equipped more and more of Paris’s parish churches with skilled clergymen over the course of the seventeenth century, editors began to publish pamphlets listing all the times and locations of all the masses.

106 Although the engraving of the pulpit attributes its design to Charles Le Brun (an attribution made in handwriting added, it seems, by an archivist), neither Amédée Boinet nor Robert Burnard mention Le Brun’s execution of the pulpit. Among other things, they attribute to him the crucifix placed atop the sacristy’s entry, the façade facing the rue des Bernardins, and the design of the sanctuary and the chapel dedicated to Saint Charles. See Boinet, Les Églises parisiennes, XVIIe siècle, 172; According to Burnard, the pulpit when he described the church’s interior dated from the eighteenth century. Whether he described the same pulpit depicted in the engraving is unknown. See Robert Burnard, “L’Eglise Saint-Nicolas-du-Charodonnet,” in Le vieux Paris: Souvenirs et vieilles demeures, ed. G. Lenotre (Paris: Ch. Eggimann, 1912), 44–49.

107 The Le Pautre engravings were part of a catalogue publicizing the kinds of woodwork and decor he could design for churches. See Jean Le Pautre, Chaires de Predicateurs, nouvellement inventées et gravées par J. le Pautre (Paris: Pierre Mariette, rue S. Jacques a l’esperance, 1659).

108 Bourdoise, L’Idée d’un bon ecclésiastique, 59: (“Il n’y a qu’un remede pour empescher les Peuples de quitter leurs Paroisses pour aller ailleurs ... procurer qu’il y ait de bons Prestres dans les Paroisses”).


111 Descourveaux, La vie de monsieur Bourdoise, 68: (“le Peuple fut agreablement surpris de voir un plus grand nombre d’Ecclesiastiques, & commença à venir plus souvent à la Paroisse, où l’Office se faisoit avec toute la regularité & le pietè possible”).
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for a given year. These pamphlets functioned as publicity for churches; as a means of attracting the people required to form a public or generate liturgical splendor. An annual pamphlet titled *L’almanach spirituel* (Spiritual almanac), for example, detailed for each month and week the masses, religious festivals, conferences, assemblies, and in some cases sermons scheduled in Paris and its environs, with information about time and location. Written by a priest named Martial du Mans who belonged to a religious order called the Tiers Ordres de Saint-François, the pamphlet first appeared in 1645. Its publication continued into the eighteenth century. Such pamphlets publicizing when and where Catholics in Paris could find various kinds of masses attest that parishioners made decisions about liturgical attendance based not just on religious obligations – which according to seminary founders like Bourdoise would require them to attend the parish church and the parish church only – but also, not unlike theater spectators, based on taste and convenience.

Sermons, too, drew crowds. Sunday masses, like the one pictured by Le Brun, included a brief moment of instruction as part of what was called the *prône*. Substantial sermons, however, of the kind associated with what Marc Fumaroli calls the “sacred eloquence” that distinguished France’s pulpits during the second half of the seventeenth century, did not occur during mass. These sermons were events in their own right and frequently took place after vespers, or evening prayers. In something of the way actors could acquire fame, skilled preachers could become famous, gain a following, and even open a path for themselves in high places, like at court. By as early as 1634, a Parisian bookseller named Mathieu Colombel began publishing a list twice per year in which he announced the names and titles of the priests scheduled to preach in each of Paris’s parish churches, monasteries, and chapels during Lent and Advent, as well as those who offered what were called *sermons de controverses*, or polemical sermons.

subtitle suggests – he promises his list was “exactly researched for the convenience of the public” – the sermons preached for Lent and Advent, as well as for polemical purposes, envisaged attendees as spectators or auditors guided not only by their devotional commitments but also by their taste and discernment.

Taste entailed judgment. Judgment eroded public personhood by focusing attention on a priest’s individual characteristics – his particularity – rather than on the ecclesiastical office he embodied. The best expression of how judgment could reduce a priest to a private person while simultaneously converting a worshipper into a spectator comes from a clergyman. Priests within the seminary milieu confessed amongst themselves to indulging in aesthetic criticism of the way other priests celebrated mass. A small manuscript conserved at the Archives of the Society of Saint-Sulpice in Paris, titled “Dix conferences aux confesseurs” (Ten conferences for confessors), contains such a confession. Unlike the majority of surviving seminary documents, which indicate what priests should do rather than describing what they did do, this manuscript is unique in that its anonymous author speaks candidly in the first person about the feelings and challenges he has faced in the course of pursuing priestly perfection. He admits to critiquing his fellow priests so severely that he felt compelled to chase them down after mass in order to tell them everything they did wrong:

One fault is the contempt in which we hold the practice of others, and this here, O My Lord, is great... never are we at the Mass except with distraction, looking with condemnation at he who says the Mass, and scorning him. Even just the temptation causes chagrin. Sometimes it goes without reason so far as to the audacity to go into the sacristy to accuse he who said the Mass in a way we didn’t like. O My God, I have failed formerly in this.

He surveyed himself with the same critical eye that he turned upon his fellow priests. The author’s self-critiques reveal how the discernment associated with aesthetic judgment highlighted a priest’s particularity. “I was ashamed of not performing well,” he admits, explaining that this shame concerned how he looked: “I was even ashamed to use my glasses and I almost exposed myself to the peril of omissions and mistakes because of the embarrassment that I feared from

\[118\] See for example Mathieu Colombel, *La liste véritable et générale de tous les prédicateurs, avec les noms & qualités de tous ceux qui doivent prescher le caresme de la présente année 1646 en ceste ville & faux-bourgs de Paris, aux paroisses, monasteres, & maisons particulières, ensemble les lieux où l’on presche les controverses, le tout exactement recherché pour la commodité du public* (Paris: De l’Imprimerie de Mathieu Colombel, rue Neusve S. Anne du Palais, à la Colombe Royale, 1646). The only features of the title of Colombel’s lists that varied with each publication were the year and the season (Lent or Advent).

\[119\] “Dix conferences aux confesseurs, ASSSP Ms. 316.”

\[120\] “Dix conferences aux confesseurs, SS Ms. 316,” 39–41: (“Une faute est le mespris qu’on fait de la pratique des autres, et celle cy ô Mon Seigneur est grande... jamais on est à la Messe qu’avec distraction, en regardant avec Condamnation celuy qui dit mal la Messe, et en le mesprisant, la tentation mesma donne du chagrin, quelque fois elle va sans raisons jusques à l’audace d’aller dans la sacristie accuser celuy qui a dict la Messe mal à nre грé. O Mon Dieu, j’ay failly autrefois en cela”). The pages in this manuscript are not numbered. In this citation and those that follow, I give the number one would assign each page by starting at the first folio and counting each recto and verso separately.
wearing glasses at a young age.”

He was not the only priest who worried about his appearance when performing ceremonies. “I discovered later that others had felt this same temptation,” he confides to his readers. Judgment placed individual actions, preferences, and characteristics in the foreground: the kind of ceremonial style that a worshipper liked best, the emotions felt by a worshipper when the celebrant deviated from this style, and the celebrant’s personal appearance.

When judgment amplified the particularity of each liturgical participant, an aesthetic response to the mass interrupted its religious efficacy. According to the manuscript’s author, concern about how he looked and sounded while performing mass caused him to turn his attention away from the mass’ object, God. In a passage describing his preoccupation with his own ceremonial performance and how worshippers might judge it, he laments “O my God, how many temptations are there in your own house and even at the altar for a soul as unspiritual as mine.” He thinks only about what his worshipper-spectators might think of him, he admits, even when he conducts mass for nuns at a nearby convent, in which case a screen or cloister separated the altar from the women so that they could not see him:

I have often found myself tempted to have beautiful ornaments and to say the mass at the best decorated altars, even when I was before the screen of the nuns. O my Lord, how many times have I had the temptation to go back over my voice, over my gestures, over what I did in some particular ceremony, imagining that these girls would see me, which wasn’t true, and I was not ashamed to not me attentive to you.

If self-criticism spiritually interrupted his own performance of the mass, criticism of others, he confesses, sometimes brought his liturgical attendance to a halt. He admits that when he, like some of his fellow priests, found the mass lacking, he sometimes chose to not go at all: “Other times we absent ourselves from the Divine Office because they do it badly … I preferred to go elsewhere and waste my time…” Whether worshippers judged a priest’s work to be artificial, spectacular, or unsatisfactory, clergymen agreed that criticism had the potential to void liturgical ceremonies. Aesthetic criticism could cause ceremonies to devolve into distraction, or make entertainments more appealing than masses.

Preaching in particular bestowed upon a priest’s auditors the opportunity to observe and evaluate him. As the author of a late-seventeenth-century preaching manual acknowledged in its preface,

Of all the people that the diverse functions of the Church oblige to appear in public, there is none whose defects are more exposed to criticism and to the distain of men than

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121 “Dix conferences aux confesseurs, SS Ms. 316,” 35–36: (“j’eusse eu honte de manquer à bien faire, mesme je eus honte de me servir de lunettes, et quasi je faillis à m’exposer [au peril] de faire des omissions, ou manquemens à cause d’une confusion que je craignois en portant des lunettes, à un âge qui n’estoit gueres avancé”).
122 “Dix conferences aux confesseurs, SS Ms. 316,” 35: (“J’ay trouvé du depuis que cette mesme tentation en avoit travaillé d’autres”).
123 “Dix conferences aux confesseurs, SS Ms. 316,” 46: (“Ô Mon Dieu, combien de tentations il y a dans vostre propre maison & jusques à l’autel mesmes pour une ame peu spirituelle comme la mienne”).
124 “Dix conferences aux confesseurs, SS Ms. 316,” 46–47: (“je me suis trouvé souvent tenté d’avoir de beaux ornemens, de dire la messe aux autels mieux parés, et mesmes quand c’estoit devant les grilles de Religieuses. Ô Monseigneur, combien de fois ay-jeu eu tentation de retracer sur ma voix, sur mon geste, sur ce que je faisois quelque Ceremonie particulière, m’Imaginant que ces filles me verroient ce qui n’estoit pas, et je n’avois pas honte de ne pas estre attentif à vous”).
125 “Dix conferences aux confesseurs, SS Ms. 316,” 41: (“D’autres fois on s’absente de l’office divin, à cause qu’on le fait mal… J’aymois mieux aller ailleurs perdre mon temps”).
Evangelical Preachers. Everyone believes it is their right to judge them and to say what they think of them…

Whether a preacher’s exposure led to fame or ridicule, the conventions that structured the time, location, and techniques of the preaching event tended to frame the priest who preached, emphasizing his personal traits, talents, and failings. This framing effect threatened to undermine priestly public personhood by causing individual clergymen to overshadow the institution that produced them. A written critique of the priests who preached in Paris during the Lenten season of 1633, penned in the guise of a private letter by an author identified merely as L.D.V.E. but published in the style of a gazette, offers a particularly harsh example of the kind of attention directed toward a churchman’s personal qualities when he dared take to the pulpit. The letter’s author lingers over each preacher’s physical characteristics and describes their preaching styles by detailing or parodying each part of the body privileged in rhetoric manuals: head, eyes, brows, and lips. Whenever a preacher pleases the letter writer, its author adopts words like “natural” to describe the preacher’s manner; words being adopted by professional stage players in the 1630s to differentiate their performances from farce. When priests displeased the letter’s author, L.D.V.E. presented them as farce players. The following farcical description by L.D.V.E. – worth quoting at length – demonstrates the aesthetic demands placed upon a preacher’s appearance, the ease with which a priest could lose control of his image in the pulpit, and the effectiveness of a theatrical vocabulary for subverting the authority priests claimed for themselves:

I wouldn’t mention an Augustinian, if the Father André did not oblige me to laugh with you by the representation of his character. He is small, rather poorly built. He has a big, mossy nose, sunken eyes – a little wide apart – covered in spiky eyebrows, over which a little horned forehead asserts itself, encircled by black hair grizzled with gray. His ears are big, approaching his mouth, which is not too small for a beggar (mendiant). All of that recedes into a hood, like a cavern, or like a snail in its shell. These beauties are perched on a very short neck, and supported by a big back garnished with shoulders bent like a comma. I forgot to tell you that his gestures conform to his face, and his voice cracks sounding like a Basque tambourine. A portrait of mockery seems to complete itself in him, as his mere appearance produces laughter and his discourse produces tears,

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126 De la sainteté et des devoirs du predicateur evangelique, avec l’art de bien précher, et une courte methode pour bien catechiser, par un religieux beneficin de la congregacion de S. Maur (Paris: Chez Jean Baptiste Coignard, Impr. & Libraire ordinaire du Roy, rue S. Jacques, à la Bible d’or, 1685), non–numbered page: (“De toutes les personnes, que les diverses fonctions de l’Eglise obligent de paroistre en public; il n’en est point, dont les défauts soient plus exposez à la critique, & au mépris des hommes, que les Predicateurs Evangeliques. Chacun croit être en droit de les juger & d’en dire ce qu’il en pense…”).

127 The author mentions three times a “list” of preachers that he consulted in the course of hearing the preachers he critiques, and that he reportedly sent to his interlocutor. This suggests that a list of preachers was being published in Paris, at least for Lent, before 1634. See L.D.V.E., Mercuriale ou examan de ceux qui ont occupé les chaires de Paris, ce Caresme dernier mil six cens trente trois (Paris, 1633), 4, 8, 9–10.


129 For an example of the use of “natural” to describe a pleasing sermon delivery, see L.D.V.E., Mercuriale ou examan de ceux qui ont occupé les chaires de Paris, ce Caresme dernier mil six cens trente trois, 16; On the decade 1630-1640 as a period of transition among stage players away from techniques associated with farce and toward a more regulated style, see Chaouche, L’Art du comédien, 9–10.
so much that by an unruly miracle his audience cries and laughs all at once… Every one of his sermons was half farce, which didn’t grieve him in the slightest…  

Visibility in the pulpit made priests public, but at a cost to the priesthood. A reply printed in response to L.D.V.E.’s critique warned, “It is not for us to judge those who we are obliged to obey, and this liberty to correct those who appear in public or who are in the orders of the Prelature is the worst evil we have ever seen among men.” The sensation stirred by a preacher’s look or method, especially if met with scorn, reduced him from a public person imbued with an aura of authority to a private person exposed to public view.

**Ceremonial Cooperation**

Whereas a priest’s performance at the altar and in the pulpit – even his ceremonial performance – could elicit critique, ceremonial cooperation rendered clerical self-display appropriate by transforming worshipper evaluation into ritual participation. As discussed in chapter one, in the context of the mass clergymen produced éclat – or an aura of authority – for the divine presence in the Eucharist by deploying ceremonial patterns characterized by multiplicity, directionality, distribution, and synchronization. These patterns associated a priest’s individual, private body with a corporate body brought into being through ceremonial action. When ceremonies worked well, this corporate body joined the bodies of priests and worshippers together into one ritual agent, thereby eliding the spectator function that worshippers at mass or auditors at a sermon could potentially occupy. In ceremonial and pastoral situations in which a priest’s self-display was most likely to elicit critique – like the mass or sermons – a “perfect ecclesiastic” learned to enforce the use of objects and gestures that figured the assembled worshippers as a unified body rather than individualized attendees. These objects and gestures differentiated worshippers from theater audiences by engaging them in the work of the liturgy.

At mass, holy water connected priests to their parishioners, figuring the assembled faithful as not spectators but rather as part of the corporate body that originated from and culminated in the celebrant. Before the sequence of ceremonies officially referred to as the mass began, holy water provided a physical connection between the altar, the priest, and worshippers. The mass officially started when the celebrant made the sign of the cross over himself at the base of the altar and began the opening prayers. Holy water – like the procession that followed it – prepared the assembly for this moment. A celebrant’s first action when he emerged from the

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130 L.D.V.E., *Mercuriale ou examan de ceux qui ont occupé les chaires de Paris, ce Caresme dernier mil six cens trente trois*, 29–30: (“Je ne mettrois pas un Augustin en ligne de conte, si le Pere André ne m’obligeoit à rire avec vous, par la representation du personnage, il est petit, assez mal faict, il a le nez gros & moussu, les yeux enfoncez, un peu à l’escart, couverts de sourcils herissez, sur lesquels un petit front en corne s’esleve, entouré de cheveux noirs entremeslez de gris, les oreilles sont grandes, approchant de la bouche, laquelle n’est pas trop petite pour un Mendiant, tout cela se reserrez dans un capuchon, comme dans une caverne, ou comme un limaçon dans sa coquille, ces beautez sont antées sur un col fort court, & supporté d’un gros dos d’espaulle façonnées en virgule: j’ombrets de vous dire que son geste est conforme à sa mine, & sa voix casse ressentant un tambour de basque, semble accomplir en luy un pourtraict de raillerie, aussi sa seule apparence faict rire, & son discours faict pleurer, tellement que par miracle desreiglé, son audiatoire pleure & rit tout ensemble … chacun de ses sermons estoit moitie farce, dequoy il n’estoit par marry…”). The priest described here is not a secular priest, but rather a priest belonging to a mendicant order, meaning those that swore a vow of poverty and therefore lived off charity.

131 C.A.L.P., *Lettre ou advis important à l’auteur de la mercuria le, touchant les predicateurs, & un livre nouvellement imprimé* (Paris, 1633), 8: (“Ce n’est pas à nous de juger ceux ausquels nous sommes obligez d’obeyr, & cette liberté de reprendre ceux qui paroissent en public, ou qui sont dans l’ordre des Prelatures, est le plus grand mal qu’on puisse jamais voir parmy les hommes”).

sacristy with his clergy and arrived at the altar was to bless water, with which he would then
sprinkle the altar, himself, and all the people in assistance. Claude de la Croix, the instructor of
ceremonies at the seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet, notes that most Missals instructed
priests to bless the water in the sacristy, where worshippers could not see them, but that in fact in
parish churches the standard practice was to bless the water in the chancel “in view of the
people.” The ceremonies that comprised the blessing and distribution of holy water
consequently converted the laity’s visual relationship to the altar into a tactile one. After the
celebrant finished chanting over the water the prayers and exorcisms indicated in the Missal, the
deacon handed salt to the celebrant in a shell-shaped spoon, which he poured into the water in
the form of a cross. The blessing complete, the celebrant knelt in front of the altar, where the
deacon handed the celebrant the aspersorium, or small rod used to sprinkle the water. Once he
had aspersed the altar three times and sprinkled himself, he proceeded to asperse all the
clergymen in the chancel, starting with the deacon and the subdeacon. Then he returned to the
altar, genuflected or bowed toward the tabernacle or cross, and began to asperse the assembled
worshippers. Descending into the nave, he sprinkled the parish’s high-ranking residents first –
the lords, magistrates, and churchwardens who had seats of honor – and then circled the nave
aspersing the rest of the assembly. Water from the altar thus enveloped the crowd.

Whether or not worshippers in fact felt connected to each other by the aspersion they
received certainly varied, but from an ecclesiastical perspective holy water not only unified the
people in attendance but imparted to them a mode of attention contrary to diversion. According
to a mid-seventeenth-century pamphlet on holy water, it had four spiritual effects, all of which
can be interpreted as antidotes for the modes of attention clergymen believed theatrical
entertainments fostered by arousing the passions, stirring up lust, breeding distraction, and
extinguishing devotion. Holy water, by contrast, “gives a present grace that disposes us to
contrition, by which venial sins are erased.” It “chases bad thoughts and distractions from the
mind.” Holy water “prepares the soul for devotion and gives it the taste for spiritual things,”
and it “brings forth the grace and assistance of the Holy Spirit and brings a great peace and
tranquility to the soul.”

Holy water replaced aesthetic taste with spiritual taste, judgment with
participation.

In addition to differentiating the assembled worshippers from an audience, the aspersion
of holy water also differentiated priests from actors by surrounding the celebrant at all times by
other clergymen who in ceremonial terms constituted part of his ritual body. Rather than
constructing the celebrant as a private individual exposed to view, the holy water ceremonies
thus figured the celebrant’s personhood as composed of a public. As the celebrant aspered the
assembly, his ritual body consisted of four other clergymen, who encircled and accompanied

s’est introduite de la faie dans le Choeur & à la veüe du Peuple, le Celebrant observera ce qui suit”).
137 “Instruction chrestienne de l’eau-beniste,” 6: (“Elle donne une grace actuelle qui nous dispose à la contrition, par
laquelle les pechez veniels sont effacez”). This is the 41st pamphlet in a collection of similar tracts on ecclesiastical
discipline, bound together into a single volume and conserved at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, site
Mitterand, under call number D-49744.
139 “Instruction chrestienne de l’eau-beniste,” 6: (“Elle prepare l’ame à la devotion, & luy donne goust aux choses
spirituelles,” “Elle attire la grace & l’assistance du S. Esprit, & apporte une grande paix & tranquillité pour l’ame”).
him, amplifying his aura. To his right and his left walked the deacon and subdeacon, holding the edges of his cope and acting from time to time as his arms. In front of him walked the master of ceremonies, leading the celebrant to each person or object that needed aspersion and alerting the celebrant “with gentleness and modesty” if he forgot which ceremonies to perform or how to perform them. Behind him and to the right of the deacon walked the exorcist, who carried the water stoup and aspersorium, passing it whenever needed to the deacon who then handed it to the celebrant. The priestly body displayed before the laity was therefore not strictly the celebrant’s own. Ceremonial cooperation extended the boundaries of his body so as to encompass his assistants and the attendees.

Priests who pursued ecclesiastical perfection used ceremonial cooperation to mitigate their exposure in the pulpit, too. The Rituel for the diocese of Alet, for example, instructed parish priests to begin the sermon by kneeling in the pulpit and saying in unison with the assembled parishioners the prière du matin, or prayer parishioners were supposed to say every morning at home. Since priests taught parishioners to pray this prayer on their knees, they would have genuflected along with the parish priest when he said the morning prayer before his sermon. The Ritual states that preachers must start the instruction after having gotten down on their knees for the morning prayer, that they will recite ... carefully and intelligibly so that their parishioners can repeat it quietly along with them, which they [the priests] will warn them [the parishioners] to do so as to teach them these prayers.

The practice of kneeling together before the sermon to corporately recite a prayer constituted the assembled faithful not as spectators but as members of a family gathered around their father. Indeed, Beuvelet defined the instructional part of the prone as “paternal advice,” comparing it to “the meeting that a good family father holds with his children and domestics so that everyone in his household ... accomplishes by the grace of God his salvation.” By embedding his self-presentation in instances of ceremonial cooperation a parish priest could trigger modes of engagement associated with the household rather than spectatorship.

Ceremonial cooperation further differentiated priests from performers by making the limits of a secular clergyman’s personhood hard to identify. The type of personhood that resulted was public in nature not only because priests exercised their functions in view of their parishioners, but also because their self-fashioning and self-presentation resulted from a collective effort. This collective quality made a clergyman’s publicness socially acceptable.

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140 Croix, Le Parfait ecclésiastique, 512.
141 Regarding the master of ceremonies, de la Croix writes “he must be fully instructed not only about his own office but also about what all the other ministers must do, including the celebrant, so that with gentleness and modesty he can warn them [what to do] when necessary.” See Croix, Le Parfait ecclésiastique, 512, xxxvii (a liminal page located between pages 520 and 521): (“il doit estre pleinement instruit non seulement de ce qui regarde son Office en particulier, mais encore de tout ce que les autres Ministres doivent faire, & mesme le Celebrant, afin qu’avec douceur & modestie il les puisse adverter, quand il sera besoin”).
142 Croix, Le Parfait ecclésiastique, 512.
143 Pavillon, Les Instructions du rituel du diocese d’Alet, 691.
144 Pavillon, Les Instructions du rituel du diocese d’Alet, 655–656: (“ils doivent commencer l’instruction après s’estre mis à genoux par la priere du matin, qu’ils reciteront ... posément & intelligiblement; afinque leurs paroissiens puissent la repeter tout bas après eux; ce qu’ils les avertiront de faire pour s’instruire de ces prieres”).
145 Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 217–218: (“avis paternels,” “la conference que fait un bon pere de famille avec ses enfans & domestiques, à ce que chacun de sa maison ... fasse avec la grace de Dieu son salut”).
Ecclesiastical authors in the seventeenth century used the concept of the supplement to explain the way liturgical action wove priests, worshippers, and objects together into a single body. Almost a century before Jean-Jacques Rousseau defined writing as a supplement to presence and almost three centuries before Jacques Derrida, in his reflections on Rousseau’s _Confessions_, subsequently brought to light the theoretical wealth of the notion of a supplement, Olier and his successors chose the term “supplement” to describe a priest’s liturgical function.\(^{{146}}\)

In a text prepared for publication by Tronson and attributed to Olier, the founder of Saint-Sulpice wrote that “the priest serves merely as _supplement_ to the host, which cannot offer itself in a perceptible way.”\(^{{147}}\) While supplementing the Eucharistic wafer, the priest simultaneously supplemented the laity’s agential lack. Olier wrote in his _Mémoires_, “the priest is to supplement the religion and respect of all the people, [who are] mute to God’s praise and insensitive to their duty.”\(^{{148}}\) At the same time, priests needed supplements too. Objects supplemented priest. “The bells are the supplement for the word and the voice,” wrote Olier’s successor, Louis Tronson.\(^{{149}}\) Likewise, priests supplemented other priests. In a clergyman’s everyday performance of self, the supplemental logic of his identity required that he embed himself in an ecclesiastical community, whether literally by living in common with a group of other churchmen or virtually by following the rule – a rhythm of waking, prayer, service, study, and rest – assigned to him upon leaving the seminary. Seminaries taught secular clergymen to avoid appearing in public alone. The rules for the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice specified that during their hour of recreation “you must conduct recess in groups (pluriers ensembles), never less than three together...”\(^{{150}}\)

Seminarians walked to mass two by two, they entered the refectory two by two, and they went out into the neighborhood to give catechism classes two by two.\(^{{151}}\) Ceremonial cooperation diffused the boundaries of a priest’s body because the supplemental relations that tied him to his surroundings operated in multiple directions.

Liturgically, rather than functioning as a discrete person with an autonomous will, a clergyman functioned as a receptacle and passageway for an agency that always had a foreign and public character, an agency that belonged to everyone a little and to no one completely. A priest absorbed the religious agency of his parishioners. According to Olier, “the priest or pastor

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\(^{{147}}\) Chaillot, Cochois, and Noye, _Traité des Saints Ordres (1676), compare aux écrits authentiques de Jean-Jacques Olier (†1657)_ (Paris: Gaume Frères, Libraires, 1676), 213: (“le prêtre ne sert que pour supplément à l’hostie qui ne se peut offrir elle-même sensiblement”). Emphasis mine.

\(^{{148}}\) Olier, Mémoires IV, 85-89, published as an appendix by Chaillot, Cochois, and Noye, _Traité des Saints Ordres (1676), compare aux écrits authentiques de Jean-Jacques Olier (†1657)_ (Paris: Gaume Frères, Libraires, 1676), 285: (“le prêtre est pour suppléer à la religion et au respect de tout le peuple, meut aux louanges de DIEU et insensible à son devoir.”).

\(^{{149}}\) Chaillot, Cochois, and Noye, _Traité des Saints Ordres (1676), compare aux écrits authentiques de Jean-Jacques Olier (†1657)_ (Paris: Gaume Frères, Libraires, 1676), 121: (“Les cloches sont les supplements de la parole et de la voix”); Adrien Bourdoise also considered priests and bells mutually supplementary. In a manuscript from the late seventeenth-century that compiles his sayings, one finds the following maxim: “Toutes les actions d’un Curé sont autant de coups de Cloche qui apppellent tous ses paroissiens à leur devoir” (All the actions of a Parish Priest are so many ringings of the Bell that call all their parishioners to their duty). See Adrien Bourdoise, “Les Sentences ou maximes chrétiennes et ecclésiastiques de Messire Adrien Bourdoise, premier prestre de la Communauté et Séminaire de Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet à Paris”, late 1600s, 101, Ms. 460, ASSSP.

\(^{{150}}\) “Reglement général du Séminaire de S. Sulpice (BN Ms. Fr. 11760),” 112v: (“Il faut faire la récréation plusieurs ensemble, n’être jamais moins de trois...”).

must consider himself as containing in himself alone all the religion of his People.”

A priest also transmitted religious agency to them. A small tract written by an archdeacon from the church of Chartres named Nicolas Janvier and published at a press near the Seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet described priests as "the canal by which the divine Graces flow into the Faithful." A priest’s function as a receptacle and channel for religious agency led secular clergymen in the seminary milieu to describe churchmen as monsters. In a chapter on the grandeur of priestly obligations, Tronson, wrote:

The Priest is a prodigy of grace, and if the word monster could be taken in a good sense, one could say he is a monster of saintliness. For in nature one calls a monster that which has a hundred heads, a hundred feet, or a hundred eyes: And the Priest by grace is someone with a hundred hearts; and he must have even more than that, because he must have millions of [hearts], he must have as many of them as there are reasonable creatures living on the earth…

In liturgical terms, a priest who conducted ceremonies or preached therefore never performed in the theatrical sense. Rather, he gave expression to the other bodies and beings whose agency was already folded into his own.

Archival Insulation

While ceremonial cooperation protected priests from the laity’s evaluative gazes by absorbing everyone into a single ritual agent, an archival strategy insulated priests against the negative juridical connotations – the criminality – that their publicness could entail or that could be imputed to them when they failed any of their duties. The use of writing differentiated secular clergymen from stage performers by placing them in the role of observer rather than observed and by subsuming their personal presence under the auspices of their ecclesiastical office. This archival strategy was really quite simple. It consisted in multiplying the number of records a priest needed to keep, enhancing the authority of a priest’s records by standardizing the way he kept his registers, and associating a priest’s archival writing with the robes that symbolized his office. Documentary multiplication and standardization, practiced by priests who were meticulous about wearing their clerical robes whenever they wrote things down as part of their priestly functions, absorbed a priest’s individual body into the mechanisms of governmental memory. A robe-wearing, document-carrying priest was not a private man. He was the parish’s memory in the flesh. Like an anthropologist – or less anachronistically, a travel writer or even a notary – with a pen in hand a priest removed himself from the vulnerable position of being watched and evaluated, establishing himself instead as the participant authorized to watch and evaluate others. Dressed in his clerical, but not sacramental, robe, a priest disappeared into the

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152 Olier, Mémoires IV, 85-89, published as an appendice by Chaillot, Cochois, and Noye, Traité des Saints Ordres (1676), compare aux écrits authentiques de Jean-Jacques Olier (†1657), 285: (“le prêtre ou le <pasteur> se regarde contenant en lui tout seul toute la religion de son Peuple”).


154 Chaillot, Cochois, and Noye, Traité des Saints Ordres (1676), compare aux écrits authentiques de Jean-Jacques Olier (†1657), 222: (“Le Prêtre est un prodige de grâce, et si le mot de monstre se pouvait prendre en un bon sens, on pourrait dire que c’est un monstre de sainteté. Car dans la nature on appelle un monstre celui qui a cent têtes, cent pieds, ou cent yeux: Et le Prêtre en la grâce est celui qui a cent cœurs; et même il en doit avoir bien davantage: car il faut qu’il en ait des millions, et qu’il en ait tout autant qu’il a de créatures raisonnables qui vivent sur la terre…”).
functional aspects of his publicness, thereby finding a momentary haven from the risks incurred by his presentational responsibilities.

The documentary multiplication that accompanied and insulated a secular priest’s public personhood can be traced in the growing number of instances in which priests were expected to write things down. Seminary training promoted documentary practices among secular priests by declaring archival negligence a sin.\(^{155}\) Rituals instructed priests to keep three kinds of records, all of which gave clergymen occasion to take up their pens when interacting with parishioners. Priests kept registers recording the name, date, and details of each baptism, marriage, and death that took place in the parish.\(^{156}\) These are frequently referred to as “parish registers” by scholars and Rituals alike. A hundred survive from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in the seventeenth century the careful maintenance of parish registers became widespread, and by the eighteenth century nearly every parish possessed “the almost complete series” of parish registers.\(^{157}\) Their preponderance and standardized form by the end of the eighteenth century attest to the rise of the parish priest as archivist. To the parish registers, the curé also frequently added testaments, or wills, which they helped sick and dying parishioners make on their deathbeds.\(^{158}\) Lastly, parish priests kept what Beuvelet called a Registre de l’estat des ames, or Register on the State of Souls in which a priest noted moral and religious information about each parishioner. These documents secured the legal and spiritual identities of each person whose name a priest inscribed upon their pages. As Goubert and Roche explain in their overview of early modern French parish life,

> Every newborn must be immediately (except in case of danger) carried to the church, often with twenty-four hours, and his act of baptism would constitute the only legal foundation for his existence: whoever was not baptized did not exist, even civilly.\(^{159}\)

Priestly archival writing constituted a parish community’s primary governmental record. Without it, parishioners could not, without great difficulty, construct for themselves appropriate forms of publicness.

Seminary instructions about how to store documents and when to release them established the priest and his publicness as quite literally archival in the most basic sense

\(^{155}\) l’Eglise estime ce soin si important que les Docteurs ne font point de difficulté d’accuser de peché la negligence des Curez en ce poinct” (The Church estimes this care so important that Doctors [of theology] do not hesitate to accuse of sin the negligence of parish priests on this point). Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 252.

\(^{156}\) In a chapter of Beuvelet’s manual titled “Des registres differens, que le curé doit avoir pour y escrire les choses dont il est chargé par l’Eglise, comme personne publique” (The Different Registers that a Parish Priest Must Have In Which to Write the Things with Which the Church Has Entrusted Him, As a Public Person), he writes, “Combien un Curé doit-il avir de Registres en sa paroisse? Il doit au moins en avoir trois: l’un pour escrire les noms des enfans ou autres personnes baptisées dans la Paroisse avec celuy des peres & meres, Pareins & Mareines. L’autre pour escrire les Mariages. L’autre pour escrire les noms des defunts (How many registers should a parish priest have in his parish? He must have at least three: one in which to write the names of the children or other people baptized in the Parish with those of the fathers and mother, godfathers and godmothers. The other to write the Marriages. The other to write the names of the deceased). Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 252.


\(^{158}\) Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 36.

examined by Jacques Derrida in his essay *Archive Fever*, as the place that joins legal authority, guardianship, and interpretation. Referring to the early Greeks, Derrida writes: “The citizens who thus held and signified political power were considered to possess the right to make or to represent the law. On account of their publicly recognized authority, it is at their home … that official documents are filed. The archons are first of all the documents’ guardians.”

Derrida adds, “They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited... They have the power to interpret the archives.”

Aware of the legal and hermeneutic authority accorded to the holder of original documents, Rituals urged priests not to give them up:

The Parish Priest, should he easily give the original Will that he has received to the inheritors of the Will, or to others? No, but only copies, being obliged, as a public person, to keep with care the original, so as to have recourse to it when needed.

Standardized writing practices in turn bolstered the legal authority and future legibility of parish registers, secured the registers’ status as official repository of civic life in the parish, and underlined the priest’s status as a *personne publique*. A pamphlet titled “Les principaux devoirs d’un bon curé” (The principal duties of a good parish priest), which summarized in to-do list form a priests responsibilities, emphasized the trustworthiness created by standardized documents. Its author stressed that parish priests “must keep good and faithful Registers” by observing the following techniques: “mark in each of these the last names, first names, quality, day, month and year, with the witnesses who were present; all of this following the Formulary added to the end of the Ritual.”

Beuvelet included templates for each kind of register entry in his *Instruction sur le manuel*, along with specifications about how to write. He told his readers: “You must write distinctly so that there are no crossed-out parts, references, notes between the lines, additions, or other similar things, which often cause great disputes in justice.”

In the interest of preparing legally sound documents, the archivist-priest paid special attention to how he recorded dates, writing them out in words instead of numerals. Beuvelet advised, in the interest of avoiding legal scuffles, “to always put the dates in long form, and not in numbers.”

Although parish documents in the seventeenth century continued to vary somewhat in their content and format from parish to parish and priest to priest, the trend toward standardization endowed these documents with juridical weight and foregrounded the parish


165 Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 253–254: ("Il faut escrire si distinctement, qu’il n’y ait aucune rature, renvoy, entre-ligne, addition, ou chose semblable, qui cause souvent de grandes contestations en justice").

166 Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 253–254: ("de mettre toujours les dacts tout au long, & non pas en chiffres").
priest’s function over his personal traits. Standardized writing practices established parish priests as both archive and archon.

The way priests used their parish registers suggests that they found in their archival practices a refuge from critical gazes and an opportunity to reverse the evaluatory dynamics to which they found themselves exposed when conducting ceremonies or preaching. Especially in rural parishes where the chances were slim that the pages of the parish registers, despite their public function, would actually be read by non-clergymen, priests left marginal notes that show how the Church’s archival mandate gave *curés* the opportunity to occupy the position of spectator rather than spectacle. In one of the first studies of French parish registers – which he called by their post-revolutionary name, “civil register” – Théodore Meignan discovered:

In many parishes, the civil registers were the confident of the parish priest who noted in the margins or on blank pages memorable events and often added to these indications satirical reflections and remarks: we have found more than once biting epigrams that would have cost their authors dearly if the baptism, marriage, or death registers had not faithfully kept their secret. Many times the humble country priest, isolated in his parish ... did not fear to pass ad *posterorum memorium* a sever judgment on the men and the things of his time.167

Whereas parish registers and wills put pens into priestly hands only at specified moments, the Register of the State of Souls provided priests with the flexibility to choose when and where to write. This register’s purpose, according to Beuvelet, was to “know more intimately, as parish priests are obliged to do, the state of the souls which are entrusted to them.”168 In the name of knowing souls intimately, a priest could turn to his pen at his whim. While a sense of responsibility, a desire to help, and the need to intervene motivated many an entry on the state of parish souls, more than a few parish priests certainly turned to their registers when feeling weary, weak, or raw from the pressure of public personhood or the constant effort to achieve ecclesiastical perfection.

A parish priest’s function as archive and archon further protected his own public status against negative connotations by making him an arbiter of public matters. The responsibility for maintaining a Register of the State of Souls, for example, gave a parish priest the opportunity to define in negative or positive terms the publicness – the visibility and accessibility – of his parishioners. Priests could thus use their registers to differentiate their own publicness from the publicness that characterized actors. Through the process of compiling a State of Souls register, a parish priest, if he were diligent, had a record of the onstage and offstage activities of any actors living in his parish. The pamphlet about the principal duties of a good *curé* instructed parish priests to keep the State of Souls register up to date by conducting an annual visit of each household. During the annual visit, the priest designated a page per family, noting their address,

167 Meignan, “Une Nouvelle source d’informations historiques: Les anciens registres paroissiaux de l’état-civil,” 132–133: (“Dans beaucoup de paroisses, le registre de l’état-civil était le confident du curé, qui notait sur les marges ou sur les feuillets restés blancs les événements mémorables et ajoutait souvent à ces indications des réflexions et des remarques stayeriques: nous avons relevé plus d’une fois des épigrammes mordantes qui auraient pu coûter cher à leur auteur, si le cahier de baptêmes, de mariages ou de sépultures n’eût gardé fidèlement son secret. Maintes fois l’humble prêtre des campagnes, isolé dans sa paroisse … ne craint pas de porter ad *posterorum memorium* un jugement sévère sur les hommes et sur les choses de son temps”).

first and last names, age, and condition, along with a chart in which he marked “P” for Pâques beside those who had confessed at Easter, “C” for communion by those who had communed, and “Chr.” for chrétien by those who had been confirmed and were therefore Christians in the fullest sacramental sense.\footnote{169} This initial visit really just served as a reference point from which the parish priest could evaluate his parishioners’ conduct during the rest of the year. Six months after the visit, he was supposed to “Go over in his mind each family to see how they behave, and if he there finds any disorder, to seek a way to remedy it.”\footnote{170} The pamphlet warned priests to keep a special eye out for people who could classify as public sinners while they were preparing the register:

\begin{quote}
He must particularly watch out for those who lead a bad and scandalous life, and try to convert them to God: And if they are public sinners, or manifestly in the near occasion of sin, [he must] refuse them the usage and administration of the Sacraments, of which they are unworthy…\footnote{171}
\end{quote}

The archival apparatus that supplemented a parish priest’s interactions with his parishioners insulated his own public appearances from scrutiny by positioning him as the party who passed judgment on which “public” activities qualified as sin.

\section*{Public Sinners}

The classification of actors as public sinners in France during the second half of the seventeenth century reflected ecclesiastical efforts to craft secular priests as public persons. Priests who relied on the categories “public sinner” and “public person” to advance clerical reform provided few definitions for these terms. However, the way seminary training and Episcopal decrees taught secular priests to understand their bodily boundaries and manage their self-presentation makes it possible to venture a performance definition for these categories. In performance terms, a public person can be defined as an individual man or woman exposed to public view and made available for public consumption by the obligations of rank or office but whose individual presence or particularity remained obscured by some combination of splendor and function. The category of public sinner, by contrast, encompassed people whose work involved exposure and availability but whose activities were not legitimized by either ceremonial cooperation or archival insulation. When applied to actors by priests, the designation “public” thus meant the equivalent of “particular and exposed” whereas when priests applied the term “public” to themselves it meant “shrouded in an aura of authority.” Although these performance definitions shed little light on the “sin” part of the designation “public sinner,” they do highlight the cultural operation at work behind the secular clergy’s double use of “public” as negative when applied to others and positive when applied to priests. Priests applied the term “public” to actors to delegitimize the alternative public-making catalyzed by actors, to deny to actors the ceremonial and archival means of forging a “public” in the aura-of-authority model, and to assert representative publicity as the dominant model for binding people together. Meanwhile, as the

\footnote{169} “Les Principaux devoirs d’un bon curé,” 17; For an example of the standardized wording recommending to priests by the Ritual, as well as an example of the chart they were to draw, see Beuvelet, \textit{Instruction sur le manuel}, 255–256.\footnote{170} “Les Principaux devoirs d’un bon curé,” 25: (“Passer par sa memoire chaque famille: voir comme on s’y comporte; & s’il s’y trouve quelque desordre, chercher les moyens d’y remedier”).\footnote{171} “Les Principaux devoirs d’un bon curé,” 15–16: (“Il doit particulierement prendre garde sur ceux qui menent une vie mauvaise & scandaleuse, & tascher de les convertir à Dieu: Que s’ils sont pecheurs publics, ou notoirement dans l’occasion prochaine du peché, leur refuser l’usage & l’administration des Sacrements, desquels ils sont indignes”).
story recounted in the previous chapter about the actor Brécourt and the parish priest of Saint-Sulpice showed, the tactic of refusing sacraments to actors unless they renounced their profession in front of a notary provided secular priests with an opportunity to stage their own appropriate publicness by conjoining ceremonies and writing to reabsorb an actor into the parish's liturgical public.

The performance definitions of public person and public sinner also help show why the secular clergy’s decision to exclude actors had the potential, in the long term, to reduce liturgical publics to a subaltern rather than hegemonic cultural position. By excluding actors, secular priests detached themselves from a medium for public-making that proved more efficient than ceremonial participation and archival insulation. The task of building and maintaining a liturgical public required far more work and infrastructure than required to develop a theatrical public. The liturgical public that secular priests envisioned for their parishes was not a self-organizing relation among strangers joined by the reflexive circulation of discourse, but rather a virtual body held together through supplemental relations. Whereas an actor’s body attracted a public, a priest’s body contained a public. Whereas actors in general benefited when the crowds that gathered in the theater facilitated the development of a public in Warner’s sense by continuing to read about and discuss a play, a performance, or a performer, priests had to pour a great deal of energy into converting and diverting the impetus for discursive public-making – judgment – into ceremonial participation while also placing strictures on the circulation of people, practices, texts, and images through archival insulation. To mitigate worshipper critiques and limit the circulation of liturgical texts and objects, priests had to institute a vast effort to educate and discipline not only the French clergy but also the French laity. In the end, the theater’s capacity to foster circulation outpaced the clergy’s ability to spread supplementation and an actor’s body could more easily attract a public than a priest’s body could contain one.
Figure 8. Adrien Bourdoise (1584-1655), founder of the Seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet in Paris, engraving, late 1650s (AN MM 472, fol. 11.)
Figure 10. Louis Tronson (1622-1700), third Superior General of the Seminary and Society of Saint-Sulpice, engraving, early eighteenth century. (Private collection.)
Figure 11. The jubé at the parish church of Sainte-Étienne-du-Mont in Paris, 2008. (Picture by Anne Whinfrey.)
Figure 12. Frontispiece of Pierre Le Brun’s *Explication littérale, historique et dogmatique des prières et des cérémonies de la messe* (Paris: Florentin Delaulne, 1716), depicting the celebration of a high mass.
Figure 13. Plans for the pulpit at the parish church of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet, attributed to Charles Le Brun (1619-1690), 1660s. (BN, Salle des estampes, R12531.)
Figure 14. A pulpit by Jean Le Pautre (1618-1682), in which an individual peaks from behind a curtain while the priest preaches, engraving, 1659. (BN, Salles des estampes, E004720.)
Figure 15. A pulpit by Jean Le Pautre (1618-1682), in which spectators gather in the nave below the preacher and lean over the balustrades above him while they listen to his sermon, engraving, 1659. (BN, Salles des estampes, E004718.)
CHAPTER FOUR

Ceremonial Improvisation and Anti-Actor Action

A popular seminary handbook titled *Instruction sur le manuel* published in 1659 taught young priests-in-training to exclude actors from the sacraments, in particular upon their deathbeds. Written in a question and response format by a priest named Matthieu Beuvelet, a resident of the priestly community and former student at the Seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet in Paris, the handbook promoted sacramental refusal by listing actors as “public sinners”:

To whom can one give the last rites? To all the faithful who request it, with the exception of two types of people:

1. Public sinners, like usurers, concubines, actors (*comédiens*), those who are excommunicated or denounced by name, unless they have beforehand made satisfaction.
2. Those who for some accident of illness, like frenzy, weakness of mind, a violent and continual cough, vomiting, and the like, cannot receive the blessed Sacrament without some irreverence...

Beuvelet’s inclusion of actors in the category of public sin marked a shift in ecclesiastical attitudes toward the theater. Prior to the mid-seventeenth century, although priests may have considered a performer’s alleged use of the passions to produce pleasure as sinful, hearsay may have associated actresses with prostitutes, the ambulatory and seasonal performance habits of many troupes may have rendered them suspicious, and the legal tradition inherited from Roman law deemed them infamous in some French cities, the Church nonetheless did not formally classify actors as public sinners. Neither the Council of Trent (1545-1563) – the Catholic Church’s official response to the Protestant reformation – nor any of the liturgical publications that emanated from it explicitly mentioned or condemned actors. Simone de Reyff goes so far as to claim that the Council of Trent had declared the theater morally “indifferent.” As Moses Barras notes, “Neither ecumenical councils nor Popes have ever issued a general denunciation of plays,” adding that “the Bible likewise fails to denounce plays specifically.” To the contrary, during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, churchmen by and large tolerated and even fostered theatrical activities ranging from farce to mystery plays. This shift from general

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1 Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 220: (“A qui peut-on donne le Viatique? A tous les Fideles qui le demandent, à l’exception de deux sortes de personnes. 1. Des pecheurs publics, comme des usuriers, concubinaires, comédiens, nommément excommuniez ou denoncez, si auparavant ils n’ont satisfait. 2. De ceux qui pour quelque accident de maladie, comme phrenesie, foiblesse d’esprit, toux vehement & continue, vomissement, & semblables, ne peuvent recevoir le saint Sacrement, sans quelque irreverence...”). All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
2 Ecclesiastical antipathy toward the theater dated all the way back to the early church fathers and permeated the theological and doctrinal traditions inherited from Saint Augustine. See Thirouin, *L’Aveuglement salutaire*; Barras, *The Stage Controversy in France*; Léoni, *Le Poison et le remède*.
stereotypes about the sinfulness of actors to their official classification as public sinners occurred in the kind of liturgical book on which Beuvelet based his manual, called a *Rituel*, or Ritual. Beuvelet’s handbook compiled the instructions recorded in thirty-eight liturgical Rituals from France, Spain, Italy, and the Holy Roman Empire. In the same way that a liturgical book called a Missal indicated everything priests were supposed to say and do while celebrating mass, a Ritual contained instructions for all the other sacraments and pastoral responsibilities performed by parish priests.

Theater scholars have associated Rituals with the rise and spread of antitheatrical sentiment and anti-theater discourses in early modern France, positioning these liturgical books as the chief weapon used by the Catholic Church to discourage theatrical activity. As Gaston Maugras and, more recently, Jean Dubu have shown, when bishops wanted to exclude theater professionals from sacramental participation they issued diocesan Rituals that included terms for stage performers, like *comédiens*, *farceurs*, or *bateleurs*, under entries concerning public sin. According to Dubu’s study of 127 such books published in France between 1600 and 1713, thirty percent of the Rituals published after 1649 excluded actors from the sacraments whereas only ten percent had classified actors as public sinners during the first half of the century. These findings have led scholars to posit that clerical animosity toward actors spread according to a top-down model, from the thinking or reasoning of elite churchmen to codification in liturgical texts to execution among the lower clergy. Stripped to its essential contours, the underlying hypothesis in the current literature contends that the Church’s anti-theater action originated with a bishop or archbishop seated on his Episcopal throne who embraced Augustinian ideas about the theater, codified them in his Ritual, and thereby prompted the humble priests in his diocese to carry out his decrees.

Maugras, Dubu, and the other scholars who have cited their work would very likely acknowledge quite readily, if pressed, that a top-down model of transmission does not adequately account for the way ideas spread in an institution as large and complex as the early modern Catholic Church. However, scholarship on the Rituals that listed actors as public sinners has not yet examined more closely the way churchmen at the parish level deployed, and perhaps even influenced, these texts. Rituals occupied a hybrid status in ecclesiastical use. They served as regulatory texts — the function perceived by Dubu — and they also operated as ceremonial objects. This chapter argues that the Ritual’s status as a ceremonial object recasts France’s moral quarrel about the theater. Rather than trickling down from regulatory texts imposed by the Church’s elite, I argue that the idea of excluding actors from the sacraments emerged first among France’s clerical underclass in places where secular priests were striving to professionalize by improving their ceremonial skills. Seminaries proved just such places. In them, ecclesiastical action against

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Ceremonial Improvisation

actors began as ceremonial improvisation, captured the attention of France’s higher clergy, and thereafter passed quickly into normative documents.

The Ritual as Ceremonial Object

Dubu’s research on Rituals charted a fruitful new path of inquiry by looking beyond early modern texts written for or against the theater toward texts that pertained to ecclesiastical practice. Issued either by the pope or the local bishop, Rituals went by many names, each name emphasizing either the book’s normative or ceremonial functions. Beuvelet noted that a Ritual could also be called, in Latin, an Agenda, Sacerdotale, Pastorale, Sacramentale, Promptuarium, Liber officialis, or an Enchiridion. Highlighting both the pedagogical purpose of his textbook and the very tactile relationship a priest needed to have with this text, Beuvelet referred to the Ritual using the French translation of Enchiridion, or Manuel, meaning a small handbook. He defined the Ritual in the following way:

What is a Manual? The Manual properly speaking is a concise handbook and summary of everything that a Priest must know and do to fulfill his duties well in the administration of the Sacraments, and in the different Benedictions that are in his power, and in the instruction that he has to give to the people on Sundays, and other similar things that pertain to Curial and Parochial functions.

A Ritual indicated the ceremonies and liturgical rubrics the priests in a diocese should observe and told them how to handle a host of practical matters like how to keep parish records, what to do if the consecrated wine froze during a winter mass, and how to minister to dying child suffering from excruciating pain. In its pages, a priest found instructions about what to say and do when he baptized, confirmed, married, absolved, administered communion, or gave last rites to his parishioners, as well as when he blessed, confessed, catechized, or preached to them.

The new terrain opened by Dubu’s work on Rituals leaves much work to be done, in part because neither he nor most of those who have subsequently cited his study have departed from philosophical or literary frameworks for analyzing the function of Rituals. As Déborah Blocker has recently noted, the studies by Marc Fumaroli, Henry Phillips, Laurent Thirouin, and Sylviane Léoni about the quarrel over the theater’s morality construct France’s theater debates as a history-of-ideas problem. And it certainly was. The philosophical issues at stake in early modern debates about the theater – issues like mimesis, imitation, and representation – were clearly important and potentially influenced or reflected the way the Church treated actors. However, from a historical perspective, as Blocker points out, the philosophically-oriented approach to the early modern theater debates has had the disadvantage of “attributing to the

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8 Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 2.
9 Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 1: (“Qu’est-ce que le Manuel? Le Manuel proprement est un abrégé & un sommaire de tout ce qu’un Prestre doit sçavoir & faire, pour bien s’acquiter de son devoir dans l’administration des Sacramens, & dans les Benedictions differentes qui sont en son pouvoir, ou dans l’instruction qu’il a à faire au peuple les Dimanches, & semblables choses qui regardent les fonctions Curiales & Parochiales”). Curial functions are those that relate specifically to the parish priest (curé) or the care of souls (cure). Parochial functions include administrative, pastoral, and liturgical tasks that the parish priest might delegate to clerics; The Catholic Church recognized seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penitence, Extreme Unction (last rites), Marriage, and Ordination. See for example Bossuet, Catéchisme du diocèse de Meaux, 18. Only bishops could administer the sacrament of Ordination. The ceremonies conducted by the bishop were recorded in a separate book called a Pontifical, whereas the Ritual told priests what they needed to do to prepare their church buildings and ordination candidates for the sacrament.
10 Blocker, Instituter un “art,” 283.
ensemble of texts written against the theater during the early modern period a coherence and importance that they might not have had.”

From a performance perspective, the emphasis on philosophical content that dominates scholarship on the relationship between the Church and the theater obscures the way churchmen actually used a book like the Ritual. At once overly long – a Ritual could fill close to 1,000 pages – and short on literary and philosophical content, Rituals appear both excessive and empty when examined using a traditional framework for analyzing antitheatrical discourses.

Rather than just a dry reference text stored on a clergyman’s shelf, the Ritual accompanied a priest as he conducted sacraments in the parish. To grasp how Rituals contributed to, or recorded, the Catholic Church’s attitude toward the theater therefore requires an understanding of the Ritual’s role in ceremonial practice. Whereas a literary or philosophical approach to the study of Rituals seeks to assimilate their theater-related content to antitheatrical discourses, ceremonial action had more to do with what Michael Wintroub calls “activation” than with representation or its theorization. Ceremonies endowed certain people, places, and objects with importance. Wintroub gives the example of a shaman’s use of ritual objects. “Objects ... only become charismatic, only perform,” writes Wintroub, “in conjunction with particular acts and particular kinds of skilled humans – those who have the cultural and spiritual dispositions capable of, as it were, turning them ‘on.’”

In early modern France Catholic ceremonies “turned on” – and off – not only religious items like crosses but also everyday things like water or fields. In doing so, ceremonies reinforced priestly authority. Ceremonial objects consequently possessed a certain kind of agency. What Wintroub writes regarding shamans could apply to priests:

[I]t is also clear that just as the shaman can ‘turn on’ an amulet, so, too, the amulet can ‘turn on’ the shaman, in the sense that it is through the performance of acts of consecration and then effecting a cure, an exorcism, or a rite of purification with the activated amulet that he establishes his status as a conduit of mysterious supernatural forces.

Ceremonies established a priest’s special status among his parishioners and ceremonial objects, like a Ritual, “activated” the priest who used it.

France’s early seminaries provide an important context for examining the Ritual’s activating, as well as its normative, functions because the Ritual enjoyed pride of place in seminary curricula. In his Instruction sur le manuel, Beuvelet explained:

The Seminaries provided the initial occasion [for this book], being that among the lessons that take place there, one of the most important is that on the Manuel: and to further facilitate this instruction, we thought it à propos to reduce the material into colloquial questions and answers.

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11 Blocker, Institutur un “art,” 284: (“Une telle construction a pour résultat d’attribuer à l’ensemble des textes écrites contre le théâtre à l’époque moderne une cohérence et une portée qu’ils n’eurent peut-être pas”). Blocker’s work provides a welcome departure from the framework she critiques. She focuses on theater apologies rather than on texts written by the theater’s enemies, and she reconstructs the value and status of these texts as gestures of political action.


14 See the opening paragraphs of the “Dessein de cet ouvrage.” Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, non-numbered pages: (“Les Seminaires en ont donné la premiere occasion, dans lesquels, comme entre les leçons qui s’y font, une
The speed with which Beuvelet’s textbook went through new editions, as well as its endurance over time, testify to the attention paid by seminary directors to aligning their pedagogy with the Ritual. Five new editions of the Instruction sur le manuel appeared in less than five years, and it went through more than seventeen editions by the end of the eighteenth century. The kind of priest who studied at seminaries also underlines their importance in relation to the Ritual’s role as an instrument against the theater. These priests were called “secular” priests because they lived and worked in the world rather than living in cloisters or belonging to religious orders. They bore the primary responsibility for sacramental life at the parish level. Seminaries, first founded in the late 1630s and early 1640s, taught secular clergymen how to work, look, and act like priests. As the word “seminary” implies, meaning “seed-plot” or “A piece of ground in which plants are sown … to be afterwards transplanted,” seminary directors believed they were cultivating a new kind of secular priest.

The period in which France’s Rituals began to list comédiens as public sinners and sacramental refusals began to punctuate the theater’s history – roughly between 1640 and 1730 – consequently corresponds to the tumultuous century during which France’s secular priests forged a distinct professional identity through seminary education, an identity that prioritized obedience on the one hand and ceremonial expertise on the other.

Seminaries treated Rituals as polyvalent text-objects that churchmen could and should deploy in two complementary ways, bureaucratically to gain mastery over time and ceremonially to establish authority in time. On the one hand, the Ritual’s normative content linked ceremonies to writing, mitigating what would otherwise be the ephemerality of liturgical action. Once recorded in a Ritual, ceremonies seemed to arise from the archive to bridge the past and future. Over time, the fact that seminaries taught churchmen to model their liturgical behavior carefully on instructions in the Ritual made the Ritual an increasingly effective medium for the kind of top-down, standardizing transmission of policies and practices that Dubu takes it to be.

Beuvelet’s manual, for example, aimed to transform sacramental prescriptions into practice, text to flesh. In Beuvelet’s words, he hoped “that the respect and reverence with which one will treat the Church’s Sacraments … will spread through a greater number of Provinces by means of the different people who come to the Seminaries.” Obedience to the Ritual’s textual content and, by extension, to the bishop who authorized it associated liturgical action with printed permanence.

On the other hand, by deploying a Ritual a priest seized the present, claiming the right to coordinate action in time as time unfolded. The Ritual’s capacity to activate the priest and his surroundings in ceremonial situations enabled a priest to position himself as the central agent and convergence point for all the subsequently activated and choreographed people and objects participating in a sacrament. In this regard, the Ritual’s normative potential depended on its ceremonial uptake and liturgical prominence. A Ritual that lacked agency in time could not easily grant mastery over time. Seminaries had to go to great pains to foster the Ritual’s des plus importantes est celle du Manuel: & pour faciliter davantage cette instruction, on a jugé à proposer, d’en reduire les matieres par demandes & responses familières”.

15 Degert, Histoire des séminaires français, 2:134. Degert does not indicate how he arrives at the number seventeen. The BN has eight editions, the last one dating 1746. The first edition (1654) is missing from the BN’s collection, so it is likely that they are missing other editions as well.
16 “Seminary, n.1.”
17 Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, non–numbered pages: (“que le respect & la reverence avec laquelle on traitera les Sacremens de l’Eglise … sera repandue dans un plus grand nombre de Provinces au moyen des personnes differentes qui se rendent dans les Seminaires”).
ceremonial status. Priests who repeated the same sacraments again and again, day in and day out, must have often felt that the Ritual was superfluous once they had memorized its prescriptive content. Seminary directors chastised this view, insisting that a good priest must always carry his Ritual. Beuvelet preferred the term *Manuel* over *Rituel* precisely because it captured the extent to which a priest not only needed to ensure that its contents became an extension of his mind but also needed to keep his Ritual always on his person. The term *Manuel* denotes a Ritual, he explained, because one must have it almost always at hand, or at least render the use of it so familiar that when you are looking for something, you can find it right away upon opening the book.\(^\text{18}\)

In seminary education, the Ritual’s status as a ceremonial object that granted authority in time expressed itself through a blurring of the boundaries that would otherwise distinguish things from people, paper from skin. Ceremonial efficacy required a co-presence that that joined the pages of the Ritual to the priest’s bodily action.

The Ritual’s dual status as both a normative text and ceremonial object offered secular priests a malleable tool, allowing them to alternate between or blend discursive and performatic registers as needed. The final days of an actor named Guillaume Marcoureau, known as Brécourt, and his encounter with the parish of Saint-Sulpice’s seminary-trained curé in the early 1680s demonstrate the leverage gained from the dual functions of a Ritual when deployed by a former seminarian. On a summer Sunday in 1684 Brécourt, an actor-playwright from the Comédie-Française, débuted a play at the Théâtre Guénégaud that was to be his last; a comedy titled *Timon*. The actors of the Troupe du Roi performed *Timon* 17 times between its début and the end of December, performing it not only in Paris but also before Louis XIV’s Court at Fontainebleau and Versailles.\(^\text{19}\) During one of the performances at Court, Brécourt exerted himself too much and, according to tradition, burst a blood vessel, which would lead within months to his demise. While the anecdotes that subsist about Brécourt do not specify the fateful performance’s date, the register maintained by the troupe’s orator, La Grange, indicates that the actors of the Comédie-Française had played *Ariane* and *Timon* at Versailles on December 17\(^{\text{th}}\), the last court performance of Brécourt’s play on record before his death.\(^\text{20}\) Whether Brécourt indeed suffered a theater-induced injury will forever remain a mystery. What is sure is that by late February of 1685, he felt sufficiently unwell so as to fear for his life.

Brécourt lived in the parish of Saint-Sulpice on the rue du Seine, not far from either the Théâtre Guénégaud or the parish church. Suspecting that his days might be numbered, on March 15\(^{\text{th}}\) Brécourt summoned the curé and expressed his desire to confess and receive the last rites, the sacraments that for Catholics paved the way from this life to the next. The priest, a man named Claude Bottu de la Barmondière, arrived at Brécourt’s home. Barmondière embodied the kind of clergyman France’s seminaries strived to form. His path from humble cleric to curé testified to the esteem in which his fellow priests and superiors held him. He had entered the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice in 1655, two years before the death of its founder, Jean-Jacques Olier,

\(^{18}\) Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 2: (“parce qu’on le doit quasi toûjours avoir à la main, ou du moins s’en rendre l’usage si familier, que quand il s’agist de quelque chose, on le puisse trouver à l’ouverture du livre”).


\(^{20}\) La Comédie-Française, *Registre de La Grange (1658-1685)*, 342.
and remained there until obtaining a doctorate from the Sorbonne in 1661. In 1664, Olier’s successor as the Superior General of the Seminary and Society of Saint-Sulpice, a priest named Alexandre le Ragois de Bretonvilliers, invited Barmondière to join the priestly society that ran the seminary, called the Compagnie des prêtres de Saint-Sulpice, and in 1665 Bretonvillier named Barmondière an assistant director of the seminary, where he taught dogmatic theology.

By 1676, the Superior General appointed Barmondière to lead a group of priests called the Prêtres de la paroisse who assisted the curé with the sacramental and pastoral responsibilities imposed by a large parish, and in 1678 the resigning curé selected Barmondière as his successor.

Sulpician historians remember Barmondière as always ready to administer the last rites, which means always with a Ritual in hand. One of Barmondière’s contemporaries, Joseph Grandet (1646-1724) – the director of Saint-Sulpice’s seminary in the diocese of Angers and the author of a manuscript compilation of short Vies about seventeenth-century priests Grandet considered exemplary for their holiness – described him in the following way:

He always carried in his pockets, when he went to visit his parish, a ritual, a stole, a surplice, some holy water, a crucifix, and a Bible so that if by chance he found himself in a neighborhood where there was a sick person in dire need, he could administer the sacraments without returning to his church.

Barmondière’s behavior conformed to Beuvelet’s admonishments in the Instruction sur le manuel, where the handbook insisted that when administering the sacraments a priest,

must take care that everything necessary for the Sacrament, like the vessels, the sacred robes, and other utensils, are prepared before he gets on the road; and above all do not administer any of these three Sacraments – Baptism, Extreme Unction, and Marriage – without having your Ritual in hand, and even having prepared, if necessary and if time permits, what you will have to do and say.

In his ceremonial preparedness, Barmondière modeled the behavior he had learned during his seminary training and subsequently expected of the seminarians in his parish.

The Ritual Barmondière carried to Brécourt’s home would have most likely been the edition issued by the Archbishop of Paris, Jean-François de Gondy, in 1654; the first Ritual in

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21 For the basic details of Barmondière’s life and career presented here, see Bertrand, Bibliothèque sulpicienne, 3:103–105; Hamel, Histoire de l’Église Saint-Sulpice, 142–143.

22 The register in which the Superior’s secretary recorded minutes from each meeting held by the Superior with his four main advisors contains the following entry for April 4, 1664: “Mr. de Bretonvilliers proposed next that we receive as an associate Mr. Bottu de la Barmondière, regarding which all were in agreement.” See “Registre des Assemblées du Supérieur du Séminaire de Saint-Sulpice et de ses quatre Conseillers”, n.d., f. 44, Ms. 21, SS: (“Mr. de Bretonvilliers proposa ensuite de recevoir pour associé Mr Bottu de la Barmondiere dont tous furent d’avis”); See also Bertrand, Bibliothèque sulpicienne, 2:104.

23 Grandet, Les Saints prêtres français du XVIIe siècle, ouvrage publié pour la première fois, d’après le manuscrit original, 2:382: (“Il portait toujours dans ses poches, lorsqu’il allait visiter sa paroisse, un rituel, une étole, un surplis, de l’eau bénite, un crucifix et une bible, afin que, si par hasard il se fût trouvé dans les quartiers où il allait un malade pressé, il put lui administrer les sacrements sans retourner à son église”); See also Hamel, Histoire de l’Église Saint-Sulpice, 150, who almost certainly relies on Grandet.

24 Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 11–12: (“Il doit avoir soin que tout ce qui est nécessaire pour le Sacrement, comme les vases, les habits sacrés, & autres ustensiles, soient préparés, avant que de se mettre en chemin; & sur tout n’administrent aucun de ces trois Sacrements, Baptême, Extreme-Onctio, & Mariage, sans avoir son Rituel en main, & même avoir prévu, s’il en a besoin, & se le temps le permet, ce qu’il aura à faire & à dire”).
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Paris to list actors as public sinners. Gondy issued the 1654 edition the year before Barmondière entered seminary, making it the version with which Saint-Sulpice’s curé had become acquainted during the most critical years of his priestly formation. While the 1654 edition did not explicitly refuse burial to actors, it listed them among the public sinners who must be excluded from communion. Not only was communion a prerequisite for Christian burial, in the 1654 Ritual the chapter on the Eucharist preceded the chapter on Extreme Unction, or the last rites, implying that the list of public sinners provided in the chapter on the Eucharist also applied to burials. Indeed, the chapter on Extreme Unction did not provide any examples of public sinners. The chapter assumed that its reader already knew from earlier chapters who fell into this category, stating only that priests had to refuse sacraments to “manifest and public sinners.”

The Ritual in Barmondière’s hands thus figured Brécourt as a public sinner. In keeping with the 1654 edition of the Parisian Ritual, Barmondière agreed to administer the sacraments to Brécourt upon one condition: Barmondière demanded that Brécourt publically renounce his profession as actor. Scholars have focused on the fact that actors in Brécourt’s situation had to promise to give up their craft – such a demand reeked of injustice – but both priests and actors knew that such promises might not hold. According to Gaston Maugras,

Almost always the dying [actor] gave in and accepted that which was demanded of him. If he returned to health, one of two things happened: either he forgot his promise and did not keep it, or an order from the First Gentleman [of the King’s chamber] obliged him to reappear on stage without the slightest worry in the world about the commitment he had made in relation to the Church.

As discussed in chapter three, although priests did hope to turn actors away from the stage, the sacramental refusal fulfilled a parallel purpose by providing an occasion for a priest to

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25 Copies of the Roman Ritual issued by Pope Paul V in 1614 were published in Paris in 1664, 1665, and 1679. It is possible that Barmondière would have carried one of these. However, these subsequent editions, at least one of which did not even bear the archbishop’s name, did not undo the 1654 edition’s status as the official diocesan Ritual for Paris. For the list of Rituals published in Paris and consulted by Dubu, see Dubu, “Le Rituel romain et les rituels des diocèses de France au XVIIe siècle,” 86–94; According to Annik Aussedat-Minvielle, none of Gondy’s successors issued a new Ritual until 1697, with the exception of a small Ritual printed in 1671 that contained only the instructions for administering communion to the sick, excerpted from the Ritual of 1654. See Annik Aussedat-Minvielle, “Histoire et contenu des rituels diocéens et romains imprimés en France de 1476 à 1800: Inventaire descriptif des rituels des provinces de Paris, Reims et Rouen” (Doctoral Dissertation completed under the direction of Jean Delumeau, Université de Paris I, Panthéon-Sorbonne, 1987), 255; For basic information about the excerpted Ritual published in 1671, see Jean-Baptiste Molin and Annik Aussedat-Minvielle, Répertoire des rituels et processionaux imprimés conservés en France (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1984), 208–209.

26 The instructions regarding those who could and could not receive communion read as follows: “Fideles omnes ad Sacram Communionem admittendi sunt, exceptis iis qui justa raione prohibentur. Arcendi autem sunt publice indigni, quales sunt notoríë excommunicati, interdicti, manifestèque infames, ut meretrices, concubinarii, comodi [comédiens, or actors], foeneratores, majgi, sortilegi, blasphemi, & alií eius generis peccatores, ni si de eorum poenitentia & emendatione constet; & publico scandalo priùs satisfecerint.” See Gondy, Rituale parisiense ad romani formam exressum, 108.

27 Gondy, Rituale parisiense ad romani formam exressum, 254: (“manifestis & publicis peccatoribus, qui fine peonitentia perierunt”).

28 Maugras, Les Comédiens hors la loi, 203: (“Presque toujours le mourant cédait et acceptait ce qu’on exigeait de lui. S’il revenait à la santé, de deux choses l’une: ou il oubliait sa promesse et n’en tenait aucun compte, ou un ordre du premier Gentilhomme l’obligeait à reparaître sur la scène sans se soucier le moins du monde de l’engagement qu’il avait pris vis-à-vis de l’Église”).
ceremonially reabsorb an actor’s body into the parish’s liturgical community, thereby reinforcing the Church’s local authority. The refusal essentially created a setting for the priest’s activation.

Brécourt’s deathbed renunciation shows how the Ritual’s status as prescriptive text complemented this ultimately ceremonial function. The classification of actors as “public” sinners in the Ritual – a normative function – enabled Barmondière to introduce writing into his encounter with Brécourt, an interaction that would have otherwise consisted only in oral and ceremonial exchanges. Barmondière required Brécourt to not just state but also to write his renunciation of the stage. To this end, the priest drew up an act, which Brécourt signed in front of four witnesses.29 Given that Barmondière demanded and oversaw the inscriptive act, the document produced at Brécourt’s bedside positioned Saint-Sulpice’s parish priest as the arbiter of linear time, the kind of time that the cyclical nature of ceremonies can only conquer piecemeal. Writing, as Michel de Certeau might say, has strategic value. Inscription grants a small “victory of space over time,” a victory constitutive of a “base” from which the party that keeps the document can “capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances.”30 Indeed, once the act was signed, Barmondière stored it in the parish register, where he and his vicars recorded all the parish’s births, baptisms, marriages, and deaths. Reduced to a line of text, Brécourt’s profession as an actor could now be enfolded into a document over which the parish priest had control.

The language used in Brécourt’s written renunciation reinforced the victory over time implied by the document’s creation. The renunciation attempted to bracket Brécourt’s past identity as an actor and eradicate it from any potential future. It stated:

In the presence of Claude Bottu de la Barmondière, priest, doctor of theology from the Sorbonne, parish priest of the Church and Parish of Saint-Sulpice in Paris, and the witnesses named hereafter, Guillaume Marcoureau de Brécourt has acknowledged that having up until now practiced the profession of actor, he renounces it entirely and promises with a true and sincere heart to no longer exercise [the profession of actor] nor take to the stage, even if he returns to a condition of full and entire health. Signed in Paris, in the house of the abovementioned Marcoureau de Brécourt, in the presence of …, the 15th day of the month of March 1685.31

29 Jal, *Dictionnaire critique de biographie et d’histoire*, 279.
31 F Hillemacher and Revérend Du Mesnil, “L’acte de renonciation de Brécourt,” ed. Georges Monval, *Le Moliériste* 5, no. 57 (December 1883): 278: (“En présence de monsieur Claude Bottu de la Baron dière [sic], prêtre, docteur en théologie de la maison de Sorbonne, curé de l’Eglise et Paroisse de St-Sulpice à Paris, et des témoins apres nommez, Guillaume Marcoureau de Brécourt a reconnu qu’ayant cy-devant fait la profession de comédien, il y renonce entièrement et promet d’un cœur véridique et sincère de ne plus exercer ny monter sur le théatre, quoy qu’il revint dans une pleine et entière santé. Fait à Paris, dans la maison d’habitation dud. Marcoureau de Brécourt, en présence de….. le 15e jour du mois de mars 1685”). The parish register in which Barmondière inserted Brécourt’s act of renunciation was burned, along with almost all of Paris’s parish registers, during the Paris Commune in 1871 when the communards set fire to both the Hôtel de Ville (city hall) and the Palais de Justice (courthouse). Auguste Jal, who conducted the research for his *Dictionnaire critique de biographie et d’histoire*, before the commune fires, cites Brécourt’s renunciation but does not provide a transcription. Georges Monval, archivist for the Comédie Française and the founder, in 1879, of a scholarly journal called *Le Moliériste*, published an article about Brécourt in which he lamented that Jal had not included the full text of Brécourt’s renunciation. Hillemacher and Du Mesnil, who had independently consulted Saint-Sulpice’s parish registers before their destruction, both wrote to Monval on 8 November 1883 to provide their transcriptions of Brécourt’s renunciation. It is their transcription, published by Monval, that I provide here.
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To lend credence to the document’s pretensions over the past and future, the renunciation text recruited witnesses against Brécourt and listed the alliances that legitimized Barmondière’s claim to use writing as leverage over another person’s activity in the yet-to-come. The text attributes no title to Brécourt, while tripling the institutional sources for Barmondière’s authority by naming him priest, doctor of theology, and curé. Surely just curé would have been enough. Next to Barmondière’s tripartite localization, Brécourt appears socially naked.

And yet, despite the parade of Barmondière’s titles and the document’s evident will toward strategy, the renunciation text reveals a tactical spirit. Tactical action, according to de Certeau’s taxonomy, “insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily.”32 Whereas the strong can aspire to strategy, the weak act tactically, operating in rather than over time to seize opportunities and manipulate events to their advantage.33 The tactical spirit of Barmondière’s maneuver can be detected first and foremost in the fact that Barmondière insisted that Brécourt put his renunciation in writing. Although during the second half of the seventeenth century priests adopted the practice of making actors refuse the stage in pen and ink, nothing in the Ritual required Barmondière to demand a written renunciation. Rather, the classification of acting as a “public” sin opened the sacramental exchange to inscription, and Barmondière seized this opportunity. The designation “public” introduced the possibility of inscription because certain kinds of writing – the writing conducted in the presence of a notary and writing distributed in print – occupied and structured the notion of publicness. One example given for the term “public” in Antoine Furetière’s Dictionnaire universel, for example, noted that an author was said to “give his works to the public when he had them printed,” adding that “Otherwise it would suffice to make them circulate as manuscripts.”34 Likewise, Furetière defined a notary as an “Officer-guardian of the public faith, who keeps the notes and minutes of contracts that parties have entered into in his presence and who produces authentic copies...”35 Writing in these two types of situations both constituted and defined a “public.” By extension, to declare a type of sinner “public” implied that his or her actions already circulated like a printed text and had transgressed the “public faith” secured by the notary’s archival storehouse. Therefore, while the designation “public sinner” had a normative character, such a designation actually served to broaden the tactical possibilities available to priests.

Priests used writing in relation to “public” sinners when they needed to gain leverage over history, a leverage otherwise denied to them by the sacrament of penance because the confessional exchange was meant to be private in the strictest sense. Priests swore to guard in silence the stories told to them during the sacrament of penance.36 In the context of confession,

32 Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, xix.
33 Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, xix.
35 Antoine Furetière, “Notaire,” Dictionnaire universel, contenant généralement tous les mots français, tant vieux que modernes, & les termes de toutes les sciences et des arts... (La Haye: Chez Arnout & Renier Leers, 1690): (“Notaire. subst. male. Officier depositaire de la foy publique, qui garde les nottes & minutes des contracts que les parties ont passé devat luy, & qui en delivre des expeditions qui sont authentiques...”). Emphasis mine.
36 “The Confessor will take care to never speak to anyone, not even the penitent, of the sins he has heard in confession, unless the penitent himself speaks of them first, in which case it is necessary to be careful not to: 1. Name the penitent. 2. Say that you heard this particular sin in confession. 3. To speak about it only to those who can give a solution, 4. As far as possible with the permission of the penitent if one judges it expedient.” See “Advis aux
writing ruptured the rite’s secrecy and inserted remembrance into a sacrament about forgetting. Lay people, too, attempted to use writing to pry open the confessional’s sealed lips. Penitents whose sins did not qualify as “public” and who felt wronged by a priest’s refusal to grant absolution accordingly reverted to notaries to try to force priests to publicize their reasons for withholding the sacraments. Such uses of public writing to break the confessional’s privacy occurred frequently enough that a handbook published in 1666 about cases of conscience—tough moral problems to which priests had to respond in the confessional—included two sample cases in order to show confessors how to keep silent if an angry penitent “arrives before him with a notary and two witnesses to demand that he state and declare whether or not it is true that he refused absolution [to the penitent] and to require him to state the reasons for the refusal.”

Penitents who resorted to notaries to make priests explain the decisions taken in the confessional wanted to escape the slippery folds of liturgical time by applying writing’s iterative force. Priests who used writing to deny a penitent access to liturgical time did so to make sure the rite would not fully wipe out the past.

The second sign that Barmondière acted tactically, despite the resignation document’s strategic pretension, can be found in the degree to which the document extends respect to Brécourt’s craft. The renunciation acknowledges that by performing in plays Brécourt exercised a profession, and names that profession using the word actors used for themselves, comédien. If Barmondière had wanted to disparage Brécourt’s craft, he could have called him a buffon, bateau, histrion, or farceur, terms that had been applied to traveling and amateurs performers in the sixteenth century and were still used to describe entertainers at the Foire as well as in sermons that denounced plays. Nor does the written statement actually use the phrase “public sinner” to explain the need for a renunciation. These details, while small, attest to the degree to which Brécourt was not entirely without his own claims to legitimacy before the likes of Barmondière.

Although less certain than the authority Barmondière could claim via Church, ecclesiastical office, and university, Brécourt’s person and profession fell under the powerful, if somewhat arbitrary, protection of the king’s house. As a member of the Comédie-Française, Brécourt, like his fellow actors, had an “almost official role” at the king’s court.

confesseurs, et demandes à faire aux pénitens,” in Divers recueils pour les ecclésiastiques (Paris: Chez Pierre Trichard, rue S. Victor, proche S. Nicolas du Chardonnet, 1657), 19–20: (“Le Confesseur se donnera de garde de ne parler jamais à qui que ce soit, non pas mesme au penitent, des pechez qu’il a entendu en confession, si ce n’est que le penitent luy-mesme en parle le premier, auquel cas il faut bien se garder. 1. De nommer le penitent. 2. De dire qu’on a entendu ce peché là en confession. 3. De le proposer à d’autres qu’à ceux qui peuvent en donner la resolution. 4. Tant que faire se pourra avec la permission du penitent si on le juge expedient’’); Even children were to give confession one at a time rather than in groups so as to preserve the secrecy of the sacrament. See Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 179.

37 Resolutions de plusieurs cas importans pour la morale, et pour la discipline ecclésiastique. Par un grand nombre de Docteurs en Théologie de la Faculté de Paris (Paris: Chez Charles Savreux, Libraire juré, au pied de la Tour de Nostre-Dame, à l’enseigne des trois Vertus, 1666), 153–154: (“il se presente à luy avec un notaire & dous témoins, pour le sommer de luy dire & declarer, s’il n’est pas vray qu’il luy a refusé l’absolution, & le requerir de luy dire les causes de ce refus”).

38 For an example of the efforts by theater apologists to differentiate “comédiens” from other types of performers, see the chapter titled “Que les Acteurs des Poëmes Dramatiques étoient distingué des Histrions & Basteleurs des Jeux Sceniques” in François Hédelin, abbé d’ Aubignac, Dissertation sur la condemnation des theatres (Paris: Chez N. Pepingué, au bout du Pont Saint Michel, à l’entrée de la rue de la Huchette. Et en sa Boutique au premir pilier de la grande Salle du Palais, vis à vis les Consultati ons, au Soleil d’or, 1666), 144–163.

performances at Fontainebleau and Versailles just prior to Brécourt’s illness figured among his official responsibilities as an actor under the king’s patronage.\textsuperscript{40} As Blocker has noted, the “exclusivity accorded” to the Comédie-Française after its creation in 1680 “publicly made its members servants of the prince, to the point that some of them dared call themselves officers of the king.”\textsuperscript{41} Jal, whose \textit{Dictionnaire critique de biographie} has preserved multiple instances in which actors described themselves as “officier du Roi,” explains, “the actors of His Majesty took this title when they did not want to reveal their station as \textit{comédiens};” especially, as Blocker and André Blanc have underlined, in situations in which the profession of actor might compromise their access to juridical or sacramental goods.\textsuperscript{42}

Furthermore, France’s professional acting troupes benefited from – although as Blocker persuasively argues they were also disciplined by – a royal declaration issued under Louis XIII on April 16, 1641.\textsuperscript{43} In this “Declaration on the profession of actors,” the king – while threatening fines and banishment on the one hand for actors who represented “dishonest actions,” used “lascivious language,” or pronounced words with “double meanings” on stage – assured that for actors who produced theatrical representations “exempt from impurities” the profession of \textit{comédien} would not “be imputed to them to the fault or prejudice of their reputation in public commerce.”\textsuperscript{44} Given that in 1684 a royal edict concerning the theater entrusted the king’s four \textit{Premiers Gentilshommes de la Chambre} – First Gentlemen of his Chamber – with the authority to approve and assign roles to the actors from the Comédie-Française, to accuse Brécourt of lascivious language or dishonest stage play would have been to accuse the king’s

\textsuperscript{40} Mélèse explains that the theaters of Paris, “more or less patronised by the King and the great... were regularly summoned to the Court or to the homes of their protectors to give private performances...” These semi-official shows were known as “visits.” See Mélèse, \textit{Le Théâtre et le public à Paris sous Louis XIV}, 1659-1715, 68: (“Les théâtres de Paris, plus ou moins patronnés par le Roi ou les grands... étaient régulièrement conviées à la Cour ou chez leur protecteurs pour donner des représentations...”).

\textsuperscript{41} Blocker, \textit{Instituter un “art,”} 337: (“L’exclusivité accordée aux trois théâtre parisiens [the Comédie-Français, the Comédie Italienne, and the Opéra] ... faisait publiquement de leurs membres des serviteurs du prince, au point que certains d’entre eux osèrent se dire officiers du roi”).

\textsuperscript{42} In fact, according to Jal, on October 13, 1687, two years after Brécourt’s death, Brécourt’s widow, Estienne des Urlis, served as godmother to at the baptism of an infant named François Baron, the son of Michel Baron, one of the Comédie-Française’s great actors. They entry inscribed in the parish register by Saint-Sulpice’s vicar gives her name and title as “veuve de feu Guillaume Marcoureau, vivant officier du Roy,” or “widow of the deceased Guillaume Marcoureau, officer of the king during his lifetime.” If she had avowed Marcoureau’s profession as actor and stage identity as Brécourt, she might not have been allowed to serve as godmother. See Jal, \textit{Dictionnaire critique de biographie et d’histoire}, 113: (“les comédiens de Sa Majesté prenaient ce titre, quand ils voulaient pas décliner leur qualité de comédiens”); On this matter, see also Blocker, \textit{Instituter un “art,”} 337; And André Blanc, \textit{Histoire de la Comédie-Française: de Molière à Talma} (Paris: Perrin, 2007), 252–253; Étienne des Urlis was herself an actress, first at the théâtre du Marais starting in approximately 1645 and then, after marrying Brécourt, at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. Upon the creation of the Comédie-Française, she retired from the stage. See Pierre David Lemazurier, \textit{Galerie historique des acteurs du Théâtre Français, depuis 1600 jusqu’à nos jours}, vol. 2 (Paris: Joseph Chaumerot, Libraire, 1810), 48.

\textsuperscript{43} For the full text of the declaration, which I will only quote sparingly, see Isambert, Taillandier, and Decrusy, “Déclaration sur la profession des comédiens”; For an extended discussion of the declaration’s import for the political and juridical status of actors, see chapter IV of Blocker’s book, “Une Institution ambiguë: Le statut des comédiens et la déclaration royale du 16 avril 1641” in \textit{Instituter un “art,”} 278–363. Blocker reproduces the full text of the declaration on pages 280-281.

\textsuperscript{44} Isambert, Taillandier, and Decrusy, “Déclaration sur la profession des comédiens,” 537: (“actions malhonnette”; “paroles lascives ou à double entente”; “exemptes d’impuretés;” “ne leur puisse être imputé à blême, ni préjudice de leur réputation dans le commerce public”).
cherished courtiers of overseeing immoral productions. Thus, although Brécourt’s status was more precarious than Barmondière’s, Barmondière could not exclude Brécourt from the sacraments with impunity. Regardless of what the Ritual said, priests could not actually treat actors like the other “public sinners” on the archbishop’s list; not unless they wanted to take a stand against the king. Despite the instructions in the Ritual, priests knew that they had to measure the worth of a ceremonial, and perhaps even a legal, skirmish each time they decided to refuse a sacrament to a parishioner who, according to the Ritual, should not receive it.

If in fact decisions about sacramental exclusion and inclusion remained circumstantial, why, then, did seminaries insist that priests carry Rituals? Rituals bridged two codes or modes that the Catholic Church wielded simultaneously, a ceremonial mode that operated tactically, and a written mode that made strides toward strategy. Especially in situations like the last rites where a priest conducted sacraments in a private home, the Ritual gave strategic weight to ceremonial action that could never be more than tactical. The Ritual’s strategic value as a textual object is obvious. A priest who had a Ritual in hand upon encountering an ailing actor, for example, was more likely to remember that in Paris such a person was considered a public sinner. With a Ritual in hand, the priest could more easily present the sacramental refusal as the will of a higher, absent authority. Furthermore, when a priest referred often to his Ritual while conducting a sacrament, the Ritual lent authority to each of his gestures and statements. In a list of dispositions that a priest needed to exhibit while administering sacraments, Beuvelet’s handbook told seminarians that when performing ceremonies they had an obligation “to follow exactly all that is marked in the Ritual, without adding or diminishing anything.” As a text, the Ritual, not unlike the written renunciation demanded of Brécourt, secured a small victory over time.

However, in a sacramental situation the Ritual functioned just as much as a ceremonial object as it did a text. To carry a Ritual required physical effort and dexterity, or an entourage. They were large, cumbersome books. The copy of the 1654 Ritual of Paris conserved at the Archives of the Society of Saint-Sulpice in Paris weighs several pounds and is more than 527 pages long. A seminary-trained priest like Barmondière knew the textual content of his Ritual well. He did not carry such a big book for lack of memory. He was the kind of priest who could remember rites and dogmas without re-reading them. According to Grandet, Barmondière had such a firm grasp of the ecclesiastical sciences that he could “repair watches and make belts for albs” – a kind of liturgical vestment – while teaching theology to seminarians. “Without being distracted by the exterior work, he applied himself inwardly to replying to the difficulties they [his students] proposed to him,” Grandet wrote in admiration.

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45 The ordonance declares, “For that which concerns the Troupe in general and the roles for the plays they will perform in particular, none of the actors will distribute the roles, nor do anything else concerning the theater without their [the Four Gentlemen’s] consent...” See “Ordonnance sur la surveillance des comédiens” (Versailles, juin 1684), Ms. Fr. 24330, fol. 93, BN: (“Et pour ce qui concerne la Troupe en général et les rôles des pièces à jouer en particulier, aucun des comédiens ne pourra distribuer lesdits rôles, ni faire autre chose concernant le théâtre que de leur consentement...”); Cited by Méresse, Le Théâtre et le public à paris sous Louis XIV, 1659-1715, 423, who reproduces the edict in his appendices.

46 Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 14: (“Enfin dans les Ceremonies, c’est de suivre exactement tout ce qui est marqué dans le Rituel, sans y rien adjouster ny diminuer”).


48 Grandet, Les Saints prêtres français du XVIIe siècle, ouvrage publié pour la première fois, d’après le manuscrit original, 2:337: (“Sans être distrait par le travail extérieur, il s’appliquait intérieurement à répondre aux difficultés qu’on lui proposait”).
not because he would not know what to say and do without it, but because it served as the centerpiece around which he could assemble what de Certeau would call “heterogeneous elements” so as, in Wintroub’s words, to “turn them ‘on’” in a way that folded a dying person into the chain of activated objects linked ceremonially to the altar via the priest’s own body.49

The other “necessary objects” that Barmondière carried along with the Ritual – the stole, surplice, holy water, and crucifix – attested to the Ritual’s ceremonial purpose. These items, associated with the mass, enabled Barmondière to remake quotidian spaces into temporary liturgical places. The stole and surplice endowed his priestly person with sacramental agency. When in a church, priests donned a surplice before entering the altar area or administering sacraments.50 A white, linen vestment with long, wide sleeves, the surplice covered the ankle-length black robe clergymen wore in non-sacramental situations.51 By putting on the surplice at a bedside, a priest performatically brought the bedside to the altar. The stole – an ornamental strip of fabric nine to ten feet in length and several inches wide with a cross embroidered at its center – added dignity to a priest’s robes.52 Worn around the neck like a shawl, the stole marked a priest’s rank in the ecclesiastical hierarchy and also indicated that clergyman of lower status could not perform the function he conducted while wearing the stole.53 Its use for sacraments conducted outside the church lent importance to a profane setting.

While the stole and surplice readied a priest for sacramental action, holy water and the crucifix sacralized the area around the priest. According to Beuvelet’s handbook, holy water had the power to “sanctify and purge our consciences, removing venial sins,” to “prevent all sorts of magical illusions (prestiges) and enchantments, to heal illnesses of body and spirit, to purify infected air, and sometimes to give fertility to useless and fruitless lands,” and most significantly for liturgical purposes, “to chase demons.”54 Concludes the handbook’s author, “That is why the church uses [holy water] in the administration of the Sacraments, at Holy Offices, in public processions, at the Exorcism of demons, and at almost all Ecclesiastical functions.”55 The water received its holiness during a blessing conducted by the parish priest each week before Sunday mass.56 Once blessed, the water created a connection between worshippers and the altar. The priest sprinkled water first on the altar, then on himself, then on the clergy near the altar, and finally on the congregants.57 By carrying holy water with him, Barmondière could link people and places to the altar through aspersion. Likewise, in a church a crucifix hung over the door

49 Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, xix.
51 Macalister, Ecclesiastical Vestments: Their Development and History, 141.
52 Macalister, Ecclesiastical Vestments: Their Development and History, 73–74. The stole also often had crosses embroidered on each end, along with fringe. In some cases the entire length of the stole was decorated with embroidery.
54 Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 192–197 The book’s pagination is irregular, skipping from 192 to 197: (“sanctifier & purger nos consciences, remettant les pechez veniels...;” “empescher toutes sortes de prestiges & d’enchantemens, guerir les maladies du corps & de l’esprit, purifier l’air qui seroit infecté; & quelquefois donner la fertilité à des terres inutiles & infrucueuses...;” “chasser les demons”).
56 Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 198.
57 Beuvelet, Instruction sur le manuel, 200.
through which priests passed from the nave – the part of the church accessible to laity – into the chancel, or the enclosed area around the altar into which only clergymen were admitted. Its use assimilated non-church spaces to the parish’s central ecclesial place. The Ritual’s presence among these objects, even if Barmondière did not open its pages, provided a reason for the assemblage of objects and actions that, for the duration of the sacrament, transformed an actor’s house into a proxy for the parish church.

The Ritual’s ceremonial status gave it a degree of openness, both as a text and as an object, that otherwise disappears from view if considered only as a normative document. Priests used Rituals tactically. Sometimes, this meant following the Ritual’s prescriptions precisely. Other times, this meant improvising ceremonial action while holding a Ritual, thereby granting authority to ceremonial and sacramental decisions. Although bishops issued their Rituals with the aspiration that priests follow it closely, bishops also knew, especially during the crucial early years of Catholic reform between 1640 and 1660, that the instructions they added to their Rituals needed to reflect ceremonial practices that their fellow reformers had devised and refined through hands-on, parish-level pastoral practice.

The Top-Down Model: From Text to Action

Whereas Dubu’s top-down model proceeds from the assumption that anti-actor Rituals drove ecclesiastical action against actors – that texts, whether normative or antitheatrical in character, prompted priests to refuse sacraments to actors – the Ritual’s status as a ceremonial object combined with the way priests used even its normative content tactically makes the inverse hypothesis just as plausible, if not moreso: anti-actor Rituals resulted from ceremonial improvisations undertaken in the seminary-milieu by the lower clergy, innovations that proved tactically effective and subsequently entered into Episcopal instructions. Stated another way, Dubu apprehended the tail end of a larger process of liturgical transformation and transmission. This larger process did not centrally concern either actors or the theater, but did negatively affect them, especially in parishes where seminary training, priestly professionalization, and theatrical entertainments converged.

The process-oriented model for the spread of anti-actor Rituals has the advantage of retaining the strongest arguments from the top-down model while proposing plausible solutions for a number of the problems the top-down model leaves unexplained. The top-down model advanced by Dubu has compelling evidence in its favor, the most foundational being that the Catholic counter-Reformation had glorified the role of bishops, thereby increasing their authority and encouraging greater respect among churchmen for ecclesiastical hierarchy. Seminary directors promoted this elevated view of bishops. For example at the end of a treatise on the importance of seminaries submitted to the Assembly of French Clergy in 1651, Olier included a section titled “Regarding the Holy Prelate as King of his Clergy.” Likewise, Adrien Bourdoise, founder of the Seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet, was fond of reminding his fellow churchmen, “Sir, but we must work inside the hierarchy, and not outside it.” Consequently, whereas

60 Olier, “Projet de l’establissement d’un séminaire (SS Ms. 20),” 54: (“Du Saint prelat comme Roy de son clergé”).
a bishop in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century in many cases had little knowledge of or control over the sacramental practices observed by parish priests in his diocese, a seventeenth-century bishop – especially one who founded a seminary and conformed to the requirements for residency and regular visits outlined by the Council of Trent – could exert considerable influence over liturgical activities in his diocese. The spread of seminaries thus helped to expand the authority bishops wielded over their clergy, a process which gradually made the top-down transmission of policies and practices more efficient.

The emphasis placed on seminaries by a process-oriented model can also help explain three of the well-known problems with ecclesiastical action against actors that remain unexplained by a top-down hypothesis. First, not all bishops listed actors as public sinners. Dubu suggests that the bishops who added actors to the list of public sinners in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century belonged to a liturgical trend referred to as rigorism, which he equates more or less to Jansenism. Rigorism and Jansenism did converge in some of the Rituals that listed actors as public sinners. The Ritual of Alet, for example, issued in 1667 by Nicolas Pavillon joined Jansenism and rigorism and was condemned by Pope Clement IX in 1668. However, according to Annik Aussedat-Minvielle, Rituals that were neither rigorist nor Jansenist also excluded actors from the sacraments. For example, she describes the first anti-actor Ritual – the Ritual issued in 1649 by Félix Vialart de Herse, the bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne – as “not at all rigorist” and notes that it was followed by many other Rituals, “rigorist or not,” that classified actors as public sinners. The interpersonal networks forged through the seminaries explain more convincingly the connection among bishops who listed actors as public sinners. Second, priests did not consistently treat actors as public sinners even in dioceses where the Ritual classified them as such. Why did some priests refuse to administer the sacraments while others, despite what their diocesan Ritual said, administered them gladly? Seminary education, as I will show, figured actors as the antithesis of a priestly identity. This aversion for actors, in combination with training that emphasized obedience to the Ritual, gave seminary-trained priests two reasons to apply anti-actor measures. Third, anti-actor Rituals pose a historical puzzle because the first one identified by Dubu dates from 1649, thus more than a

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63 Historians often use the term rigorism somewhat loosely in relation to seventeenth and eighteenth century Catholicism to designate a tightening of ecclesiastical discipline. Aussedat-Minvielle uses the term strictly to characterize Rituals in which the requirements for confession and penance were so high so as to make it nearly impossible for a parishioner to receive the absolution needed in order to take communion. See Aussedat-Minvielle, “Histoire et contenu des rituels diocésains et romains imprimés en France de 1476 à 1800,” 165–167: (“nullement rigoriste;” “rigoriste ou non”); The Dictionary of the Académie Française defined a rigorist as “Celui, celle qui pousse trop loin la sévérité dans la Morale” (He or she who pushes severity too far in moral matters). See “Rigoriste,” Dictionnaire de l’Académie Française, Revu, corrigé et augmenté par l’Académie elle-même: L-Z (Paris: Chez J.J. Smits et Ce., 1789), 503.

64 August Jal’s bibliographic research in parish records – most of which have since burned – led him to observe: “One will see among the numerous acts concerning the actors to whom I have consecrated articles that there was no fixed rule in the Church of Paris regarding people who took to the stage, and that one sacristy welcomed quite well the actor who behaved like a Christian, while in another he was obliged to present himself under the title of ‘Officer of the King’ or simply as ‘Bourgeois of Paris.’” See Jal, Dictionnaire critique de biographie et d’histoire, 164: (“On verra parmi les actes nombreux intéressant les comédiens auxquels j’ai consacré des articles ici, qu’il n’y avait point de règle fixe dans l’Eglise de Paris en ce qui touchait aux personnes qui montaient sur le théâtre, et que telle sacristie accueillait très-bien le comédien qui faisait acte de chrétien, quand dans telle autre il était obligé de se présenter sous le titre d’officier du Roi ou seulement de bourgeois de Paris”).
decade before the now-canonical antitheatrical texts of the 1660s appeared.\textsuperscript{65} If antitheatrical discourses prompted anti-actor Rituals, why did the Rituals come first?

The problems unresolved by Dubu’s account point to the bottom-up aspects of liturgical transformation that complemented and prepared the way for the top-down movement Dubu perceived. This bottom-up dynamic can be teased out by examining from a liturgical rather than textual perspective the explanation Dubu proposes for the problematic chronology and partial dissemination of anti-actor Rituals. In the chapter following his discussion of Rituals, Dubu hypothesizes that an ecclesiastical text published before 1649 – a text that served as a resource to the kinds of reform-minded bishops who issued diocesan Rituals – precipitated the decision to list actors as public sinners. He identifies as the culprit a Latin edition of Charles Borromeo’s works – many of which were originally composed and published in Italian – published in Paris in 1643 under the title \textit{Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis}, or \textit{Acts of the Church of Milan}, and claims that the edition exaggerated passages from the saint’s Episcopal instructions that mentioned entertainments and entertainers.\textsuperscript{66} Dubu concludes that bishops who listed actors as public sinners drew their inspiration from the 1643 edition’s abusive interpretation of Borromeo’s text.

Scholarship on the Catholic Counter-Reformation widely acknowledges Borromeo, the archbishop of Milan from 1564 to 1584, as one of Catholic Europe’s most innovative and influential reformers. Paul Broutin credits him with a “pastoral genius.” A priest, archbishop, cardinal and, very quickly after his death in 1584, a saint, for early modern French priests Borromeo was, in Broutin’s words, “the great master to which everyone looked.”\textsuperscript{67} The Venetian ambassador apparently said of him, “The example of Borromeo is worth more than all the decrees of the Council of Trent.”\textsuperscript{68} Indeed, according to Joseph Bergin, “The Council’s own thinking about the priesthood was limited, defined as it was by the need to resist the Protestant reformers’ assaults on the concept of a priesthood set apart from the rest of the Christian community by its own special sacrament.”\textsuperscript{69} Given this void, Borromeo’s example helped priests figure out what they actually needed to do. Borromeo’s name recurs often in Episcopal and seminary documents. Beuvelet cites Borromeo in the chapter of his handbook on penitence and recommended that priests read portions of Borromeo’s \textit{Vie} every day.\textsuperscript{70} In a list of “Books useful

\textsuperscript{65} For a very helpful timeline of the “Querelle du théâtre,” see Thirouin, \textit{L'Aveuglement salutaire}, 265–271.
\textsuperscript{66} Caroli Borromaei, \textit{Acta ecclesiae mediolanensis, sive Sancti Caroli Borromaei instructiones et decreta. In quibus, de ecclesiariarum fabrica, supplвлекательe & ornatu; de virorum ecclesiasticorum dignitate, vita & officio; de politia ecclesiastica, cultu divino, animarum regimine, & omnium hominum salute procuranda, pié, sancte ac cumulâtè praecipitur. Praeterea ejusem sancti appendices septem: I. De cura pestilentiae; II. Sacramentale: sive sacramentorum administrandi ritus; III. Instructio praedicatoris verbi Dei; IV. De nitore & munditia ecclesiae; V. Institutio seminarii: seu clericorum instructuorud ratio; VI. De disciplina familia Episcopalis, dèque eius regimine; VII. Selecta quaedam edicta, & monita christiana} (Parisii: Apud Joannem Jost, viâ Jacovaeâ, sub signo Spiritus Sancti, 1643); Dubu develops this argument in chapter six, titled “Le grand saint Charles, ‘l’antidote le plus sûr à la corruption de la morale’” in Dubu, \textit{Les Églises chrétiennes et le théâtre (1550-1850)}, 95–106.
\textsuperscript{68} Cited by Broutin, \textit{La Réforme pastorale en France au XVIIe siècle}, 1:39: (“L’exemple de Borromée a plus de valeur que tous les décrets du Concile”).
\textsuperscript{69} Bergin, “From Dioceses to Parishes: The Geography of the French Church,” 205.
\textsuperscript{70} In a subsection of a chapter on the sacrament of Penance, Beuvelet writes “And Saint Charles ... whose doctrine and practice is approved by all the Church, hurls insults in his instructions to confessors against those who are so indulgent as to grant absolution to all kinds of people...” See Beuvelet, \textit{Instruction sur le manuel}, 149: (“Et S. Charles ... dont la doctrine & la pratique est approuvée de toute l’Eglise, invective dans ses advertissemens aux
for curés and priests,” the house rules at the Seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet named the Actes de Milan par S. Charles as second in importance only to the Corps du droit Canon in a category titled “Books on ecclesiastical discipline.”71 And Claude Pierre Goujet, author of a Vie about Félix Vialart de Herse, the bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne who issued France’s first anti-actor Ritual in 1649, claims “The instructions of this Ritual are solid: they took as their model those of Saint Charles Borromeo for Confessors.”72 The editions of Borromeo’s works published in France – and there were many73 – undoubtedly shaped ecclesiastical attitudes about confession.

However, several difficulties undermine a hypothesis that traces the classification of actors as public sinners to the 1643 edition of the Acta. Borromeo’s instructions published in 1643 did not list entertainers as public sinners, not even in a short passage titled “De Histrionius, mimus, circulatoribus, tabernis meritoris, & aleatoribus,” or, “Of actors, mimes, traveling entertainers, hostels, and gamblers.”74 Although the equivalent of France’s seventeenth-century comédien did not exist yet, as Dubu rightly points out, none of Borromeo’s instructions about the sacraments exclude histrions or mimes.75 The passages cited by Dubu as evidence for an abusive Latin translation do not clearly transgress the meaning of Borromeo’s Italian text, nor do they discuss entertainments in a way that would depart from the ideas already present in the writings of Church Fathers like Tertullian, Cyprian, and Chrysostom, who Borromeo cites.76 Therefore, although it does seem likely that Vialart or the priests who helped him compose the Ritual of 1649 consulted either the 1643 edition of Borromeo’s Acta or one of the subsequent French translations based on the 1643 edition, Vialart still would have needed to do some innovating of his own in order to draw the conclusion that the Borromean model for a good bishop entailed listing actors as public sinners.

Yet, a plausible alternative hypothesis emerges when the investigation shifts from a focus on texts to a focus on people. The shift in focus from texts to people places Olier and his clergy in the parish and Seminary of Saint-Sulpice in the lime light. Dubu credits Olier as the “instigator” behind the 1643 edition of the Acta.77 The attribution, which proves questionable upon closer inspection, rests on a Sulpician literary tradition based on research conducted by Étienne-Michel Faillon, the author of a three-volume Vie about Olier.78 According to Faillon,
“The first work given to the public by the priests of Saint-Sulpice was the precious collection of *The Acts of the Church of Milan*." Faillon founds his claim on a manuscript memoir written by one of Olier’s first seminarians, Jean du Ferrier (1609-1685), who served until 1649 as the superior of the Prêtres de paroisse, the community of priests that Barmondière would later lead before becoming Saint-Sulpice’s parish priest. Du Ferrier thus oversaw the priests who administered sacraments in the parish. He mentions the *Acta* in a passage about Olier’s efforts to encourage the confessors in the parish of Saint-Sulpice to refuse absolution to parishioners who did not avoid situations that could tempt them to sin. “These *Acts*, which we had printed in Paris,” writes du Ferrier, “served as a rule for the priests, especially regarding the refusal and delay of absolution, the practice of which as we see is fruitful; making [penitents] first quit the next occasions of sin and imposing penitential practices against habitual sins.” From this quote, Faillon concludes that Olier “published” the *Acta*, although the text of the *Acta* does not mention either Olier or Saint-Sulpice and the *privilège* printed at the beginning of the text gives full credit for the work to Jean Jost, its publisher. Nonetheless, Ferrier’s manuscript also features, serendipitously, an episode about the refusal of sacraments to an actor in the parish of Saint-Sulpice in 1647. This episode, overlooked by theater historians, makes it possible to hypothesize that Vialart drew his inspiration for the classification of actors as public sinners from ceremonial experiments in the parish of Saint-Sulpice during the first five years of Olier’s tenure as curé.

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80 Ferrier withdrew from the Society of Saint-Sulpice in 1649 and became the vicar general of the diocese of Alby. Ferrier’s memoirs, which were probably written around 1680, cover the years 1630-1683. Copies are conserved at the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève (Ms. 1480), at the Archives nationales de France among the papers for the Oratorians rather than the Sulpicians (M 215, n. 11), at the Bibliothèque nationale de France and, at least when Faillon published the fourth edition of his *Vie*, in the library of the city of Carpentras. See Bertrand, *Bibliothèque sulpicienne*, 3:62. As of the completion of this dissertation, I have not yet had the opportunity to consult Ferrier’s memoir firsthand. However, I have transcribed all the quotes from the manuscript reproduced in Faillon’s volumes and created a document that lists these quotes in order according to the folio numbers given by Faillon for their location in the manuscript. Faillon reproduces extensive passages covering most of the folios from 246 to 286, as well as long passages from folios 325 through 336.

81 Qtd. by Faillon, *Vie de M. Olier*, 2:26–27: (“Ces Actes, que nous fîmes imprimer à Paris, dit M. du Ferrier, servirent de règles aux prêtres, spécialement sur le refus et le délai de l’absolution, comme nous voyons qu’on le pratique avec fruit; faisant quitter auparavant les occasions prochaines, et imposant des pratiques de pénitence contre les péchés d’habitude”).

82 Borromaei, *Acta ecclesiae mediolanensis* The relevant portion of the privilege reads: “Nostre bien amé Jean Jost, Libraire de nostre bonne ville de Paris; nous a fait remontrer, qu’ayant veu depuis long-temps desirer les Oeuvres de Saint Charles Borromée, & sçachant d’ailleurs comme elles sont tres-necessaires à tous les Ecclesiastiques; il s’est employé avec soin & dépense pour les recourer, mesmes s’en est pourveu de deux editions; l’une de Bresse, & l’autre de Milan, qu’il a fait collationner l’une sur l’autre, celle de Bresse s’estant trouvée si pleine de fautes, qu’en mille endroits le sens estoit corrompu: De plus, il a fait traduire en Latin ce qui ne se trouvoit qu’en Italien, pour estre le tout utile à ceux qui n’entendent pas la langue Italienne; Mais pour ce qu’il ne seroit raisonnable qu’il fust frustré de son travail & dispense par l’entreprise d’autres particuliers à son prejudice, requierroit humblement luy estre pourveu de nos lettres sur ce necessaire... Nous luy avons permis & octroyé de nostre grace, pleine puissance & autorité Royale, par ces presentes, permettons & octroyons audit Jost, de faire imprimer, vendre & debiter en tous les lieux de nostre obeïssance lesdites Oeuvres de Saint Charles...”; Louis Bertrand reproduces Faillon’s claim in his *Bibliothèque sulpicienne*, 3:7–8; Although Faillon and Bertrand do not call Olier the “editor” of the Acta, stating only that he “gave it to the public,” the Sulpician literary tradition gradually comes to consider Olier solely responsible for the text’s content. See for example Krumenacker, *L’École française de spiritualité*, 284. Gradually, the tradition identified Olier as the text’s “éditeur scientifique.” See for example the text’s “notice” in the online catalogue for the BNF: http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb302238571/PUBLIC.
Whether or not Olier had any involvement in the Acta’s publication does not greatly matter. What matters is that in the parish of Saint-Sulpice the esteem in which Olier held Borromeo guided a more rigorous approach to penance, an approach that during Olier’s tenure entailed an experimental quality in keeping with the sense shared by him and his collaborators that their seminary, too, founded in 1641 by a group of six young clergymen, was a sort of improbable experiment.\(^{83}\) This experimental spirit had two features relevant to the sacramental inclusion or exclusion of actors. First and most importantly, the Borromean model directed the clergy’s attention toward activities in the local parish, creating a proactive attitude toward behaviors that could be construed as sin in the absence of the exhaustive lists of public sinners that began to appear in Rituals with greater frequency starting in the 1660s. Although evidence does not suggest that Olier had a well-developed philosophy about the theater’s evils, by coincidence the parish of Saint-Sulpice had all the ingredients required for a sacramental innovation regarding entertainers. The parish church sat across the street from a seasonal fair called the Foire Saint-Germain where entertainers performed during Lent, and the parish also had many jeux de paume\(^{84}\), or the kind of buildings that Paris’ first permanent theater troupes turned into play houses in the 1630s and 1640s. Second, to the extent that priests in neighboring parishes shared an interest in identifying effective confessional practices, innovations in one parish could spread to another.

Faillon’s account details the rigorous approach to penance, while du Ferrier’s narrative expresses the experimental spirit that infused it. Faillon reports that in 1643, Olier invited an unspecified number of doctors from the Sorbonne to come and help hear confession, along with the heads of the religious orders in the parish.\(^{85}\) Then, concerned that the confessors he had recruited from the orders and the Sorbonne would not impose the same penitential standards, he held a three-day conference in which he presented Borromeo’s instructions:

Monsieur Olier feared however that so many religious from diverse orders and so many doctors from the Sorbonne would not follow the same moral principles, and that this diversity would have terrible results, he brought them together for three days and exposed to them the principles and instructions of saint Charles, which produces great good.\(^{86}\)

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\(^{83}\) For a list of the first collaborators and seminarans, see Doncourt, *Remarques historiques, sur l’Eglise et la paroisse de S. Sulpice*, 1:203.

\(^{84}\) According to Clarke, “more jeux de paume or real tennis courts (where one could also play cars and billiards as well as the game for which they were intended) were located there than in any other area of Paris, as well as the best inns for travellers.” See Clarke, *The Gunénégaud Theatre in Paris (1673-1680): Founding, Design and Production*, 1:58. Although Clarke refers to the Faubourg Saint-Germain not Saint-Sulpice, the parish of Saint-Sulpice covered the Faubourg. For more information about the location of the parish church in relation to the fairgrounds and the theaters, see my discussion in chapter three.


\(^{86}\) Faillon, *Vie de M. Olier*, 2:28: (“M. Olier craignant cependant que tant de religieux de divers ordres, et tous ces docteurs de Sorbonne ne suivissent pas les mêmes principes de morales, et que cette diversité n’eût de fâcheux résultats, il les réunit pendant trois jours, et leur exposa les principes et les instructions de saint Charles: ce qui produisit de grands bien”); Faillon does not specify whether or not Olier used the 1643 edition for this three-day conference, but the Acta’s publisher, Jost, dedicated the volume to the doctors of the Sorbonne, such that at the very least Jost’s edition targeted the same audience in relation to whom Olier wanted to promote a Borromean model for confession and absolution. The letter can be found on the two preliminary pages following the title page. Its title reads “Doctrina sapientia et peitate celeberrimis theologis priori doctoribus et sociis collegii sorbonici parisiensis. Joannes Jost Bibliopola.” See Borromaei, *Acta ecclesiae mediolanensis*, á iij. The privilege indicates that the first printing was completed on May 27, 1643. Faillon does not specify the dates of Olier’s three-day conference. If the
According to Faillon, Olier invoked Borromeo to serve a normalizing function. The normalizing function, however, required experimentation, as du Ferrier’s narrative makes clear. He mentions the Acta as the prelude to a sequence of anecdotes demonstrating that the “the refusal and delay of absolution … is fruitful” for reforming a parish. Rather than depicting scenarios in which priests who attended Olier’s conference for confessors applied Borromeo’s instructions letter by letter, du Ferrier’s account depicts scenarios in which priests in Saint-Sulpice improvised in light of Borromeo’s model and in which effective ceremonial innovations subsequently spread to other parishes.

A story about dueling exemplifies the narrative pattern used by du Ferrier in which Borromeo’s model prompts a focus on local problems that require new ceremonial solutions that subsequently spread quickly. Sulpician historians and Olier’s Vies indicate that he worried primarily about dueling and prostitution, two activities frequent in his parish. Du Ferrier claims to have come up with the idea of requiring penitents to promise, in the confessional, to never fight in a duel, an idea he presented first to Olier, who liked it and who supported du Ferrier’s decision to order all the confessors among the Prêtres de la paroisse to put the idea into practice. Du Ferrier’s narrative constructs the events as a sacramental experiment that worked against all odds and then spread: “We saw very clearly the extreme difficulty of curing a malady of this sort [dueling], which had infected all of France, but … after having seen the establishment of the seminary succeed so easily, considered impossible, nothing appeared impossible to us,” he writes, continuing, “We gave order, in the community [of priests] to all the confessors to interrogate penitents on this issue, and to require from them a promise to not fight in duels.”

According to du Ferrier, this practice struck penitents as an innovation too. “In the beginning, this surprised penitents,” du Ferrier writes, “They said no one had ever made them a similar proposition. There were some who demanded time to think about it.” Subsequently, according to du Ferrier, all the curés in Paris adopted the innovation as a recommended practice during an assembly convened by the archbishop of Paris’s Great Vicar. Although du Ferrier’s version of events flatters his own legacy and that of Saint-Sulpice, his account nonetheless depicts the way a sacramental practice could begin among the lower clergy as a “what if” proposition – What if we make honor-conscious penitents promise not to duel before receiving absolution? – and then

conference occurred before May, Olier could not have used the volume. However, if Olier did indeed have any involvement in the volume’s publication, it would nonetheless have reinforced the message communicated by his conference.

87 During the early years of Olier’s tenure as parish priest, he concentrated on establishing catechisms, closing brothels, campaigning against dueling, correcting superstitious practices that he thought had crept into confraternities, and on increasing the number of religious services offered by the parish church. See Doncourt, Remarques historiques, sur l’Eglise et la paroisse de S. Sulpice, 3:615–648.


migrate across a region and up the ecclesiastical hierarchy, where the archbishop and his representatives had the authority to transform the innovation into a prescription.

Although the Borromean model promoted by Olier did not target actors, the resulting concern about what du Ferrier called “the next occasions of sin” drew the curé’s attention to the entertainers who performed at the Foire Saint-Germain. According to Simon de Doncourt, who compiled a history of the parish of Saint-Sulpice during the second half of the eighteenth century, Olier took great care during the Foire Saint-Germain to prevent people from exposing in this place dishonest pictures, he went there and sent sometimes other people to consider whether they might not find any, and when they found some, he had them seized by the Officers of Justice, pursuing them to make them condemned to good fines. *Seeing furthermore that in this time several murders occurred in the public places where one sees cord dancing [tightrope walking], and others of similar nature, he exerted all his efforts to stop them.*

Here, at least as Doncourt presents the events, bloodshed rather than antitheatrical attitudes *per se* precipitated Olier’s efforts to put a stop to fairground entertainments. During the fair of 1647, however, according to Faillon, a chance encounter between one of the Prêtres de la paroisse and a seasonal performer resulted in the withholding of sacraments from a man the priests of Saint-Sulpice considered a *comédien*. The event caused a stir among both priests and actors alike, gaining approval from clergy throughout Paris. Given that scholarship on the refusal of sacraments to actors has traditionally considered Marlin’s refusal to bury Molière in 1673 the first such case in Paris, the 1647 incident recalibrates the timeline for this practice.

Like du Ferrier’s innovation regarding dueling, the 1647 incident had an experimental quality, although in this case the sacramental experiment derived not from a plan but rather from something closer to clerical indecision in the face of an unusual situation. Based on du Ferrier’s mémoire and a manuscript from the *Archives du ministère des affaires étrangères* concerning Rome, Faillon tells the story in the following way:

> In 1647, the leader of a troupe of actors (*comédiens*), or rather of wandering entertainers (*baladins*), who entertained the populace on temporary stages (*tréteaux*), fell extremely sick and requested the sacraments; the priest charged with administering them contented himself with absolving [the actor], without daring to give him the Holy Viaticum, because of his profession.

The encounter’s experimental quality shows in two ways. The priest did not order the actor to renounce his profession, which was the norm for public sinners. Furthermore, the priest did, in fact, grant absolution but withheld communion, whereas once the practice of refusing sacraments

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to actors found its way into Rituals, priests did the opposite, withheld absolution but then granting the sacraments once absolution had been given. The priest in the 1647 incident did not, therefore, follow a recommendation. Instead, he combined elements of his sacramental repertoire to improvise an appropriate response to the actor’s illness.

As the priests of Saint-Sulpice remember it, the priest’s improvised sacramental response unexpectedly produced a conversion. “Seeing that the illness was growing worse,” narrates Faillon, “the friends of the sick actor (le malade) came to the priest in the night and implored him with great insistence to bring the Blessed Sacrament to [the actor], but without obtaining anything.”\footnote{Faillon, \textit{Vie de M. Olier}, 2:373: (“Comme le mal augmentait, les compagnons du malade vinrent la nuit prier avec beaucoup d’instances, qu’on lui portât le saint Sacrement; mais sans rien obtenir”).} According to Faillon’s account, the actor’s friends spontaneously had a change of heart and the sick leader offered to renounce the stage:

This refusal touched them so deeply that the very next day one of them converted, and the sick one especially, recognizing that he was unworthy of Holy Communion, declared that he would renounce sincerely the theater; having recovered his health, abandoned it [the theater] definitively.\footnote{Faillon, \textit{Vie de M. Olier}, 2:373: (“Ce refus les toucha si vivement, que, le surlendemain, l’un d’eux se convertit, et que le malade surtout, se reconnaissant indigne de la sainte communion, protesta qu’il renonçait sincèrement au théâtre, et, ayant recouvré la santé, il l’abandonna en effet sans retour”).}

The rest of the narrative follows the pattern constructed by du Ferrier’s account about confessional innovations for the duel. “There was much talk in Paris about this refusal of the Holy Viaticum,” writes Faillon, “it was discussed in the monthly assembly of parish priests (\textit{MM. les curés}), who approved it as very suitable; They even thought it was à propos to talk about it in the prone at Saint-Sulpice, to justify it.”\footnote{Faillon, \textit{Vie de M. Olier}, 2:373: (“On parla beaucoup dans Paris de ce refus du saint viatique; il en fut question dans l’assemblée du mois de MM. les curés, qui l’approvèrent comme très-convenable; on crut même qu’il était à propos d’en parler au prône à Saint-Sulpice, pour le justifier”).} Surely, the actors in question would recount the story differently. However, the version retained by ecclesiastical memory presents a local, and even hesitant, sacramental improvisation by a nameless priest as the seed from which a consensus among Parisian clergy grew that withholding sacraments could turn actors from the stage and that actors should not receive the last rites without renouncing their profession.

The sacramental refusal of 1647 confirms one aspect of Dubu’s argument. Borromeo’s Episcopal instructions inspired Catholic reform efforts in France and, in doing so, provided reformers with a legitimizing name to evoke as they conducted ceremonial experiments. The text-centric premise upon which Dubu builds his argument, however, does not sufficiently explain the circuitous way in which a Borromean model came to encompass and justify the refusal of sacraments to actors. The winding path from Borromean inspiration to anti-actor Ritual had to pass through the crucible of ceremonial experimentation aided by the historical coincidence that one cluster of the French priests who promoted Borromeo’s instructions happened to live and work in a theater district. Rather than understanding Borromeo’s influence as a top-down transfer of Episcopal instructions from original text to abusive translation and from Italian to French ecclesiastical elites, it is more helpful to think of the operation of Borromeo’s influence as analogous to what Foucault calls the author function. In something of the way the name “Freud” designates a particular man, the texts written by that man, and “the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts” that arise from Freud’s work,
Borromeo’s name stood in for a collection of practices, trends, and stories that furnished the possibilities and rules for other actions. Borromeo’s Episcopal instructions – in their various editions – provided rules akin to the rules for a game. A significant part of the Borromean game unfolded on the ground where it concerned bodies and not just texts. In other words, the Borromean game involved an upward, creative movement at least as important as the downward, normative movement Borromeo’s name also justified. Borromeo’s name enabled ideas and people to flow not only from text to action, but also from action to text.

**From Action to Text**

As with all improvisational exercises, constraining factors enabled and animated ceremonial experimentation and sacramental improvisation. Seminaries, although still nascent during the 1640s and 1650s when the first anti-actor Rituals appeared, provided the creatively constraining context within which priests cautiously undertook ceremonial experiments, as well as the animating organism through which sacramental innovations could spread, becoming normative prescriptions. A closer look at how France’s early seminaries trained clergymen and then put them into circulation will provide a first step toward explaining the upward movement from ceremonial experimentation to ecclesiastical prescription that operated in tandem with the top-down movement identified by Dubu.

The focus on people rather than discourses that an action-to-text perspective entails offers a new hypothesis about the partial dispersion of anti-actor Rituals, addressing the question “Why did some bishops list actors as public sinners and not others?” I propose that as seminaries spread, anti-actor Rituals appeared in their wake. The action-to-text perspective also addresses the problem of erratic application by proposing that seminary-trained priests had a greater ideological incentive to exclude actors from the sacraments. Not only did seminaries form secular priests who were prone to meticulously follow the instructions published by a bishop in his diocesan Ritual, thereby facilitating the top-down movement of ideas from upper to lower clergy, seminary training also positioned an aversion to the theater as central to the mentality appropriate to a secular priest. Although multiple variables affected the dispersion and application of anti-actor Rituals – Jansenism, Gallicanism, the presence of a lively theater scene near a church – France’s seminaries quietly fueled the clergy’s growing campaign against the theater during the second half of the seventeenth century.

Seminary life, and the habits impressed upon clergymen who spent time in a seminary, imposed stringent constraints on self-expression and autonomous action. Borrowed from practices standard in religious orders and monasteries, these constraints included, among other things, communal living, observance of a common daily rule that governed the hour and method for everything from prayer to eating, silence, devotional exercises, modesty in dress and action, and retreats. These constraints had a creative purpose that, at first glance, appears to have nothing to do with the theater or with the refusal of sacraments to actors. Seminary regulations produced a new type of secular priest, symbolized by the *bon curé*, or “good parish priest,” who perfectly and simultaneously fulfilled six kinds of duties, duties toward God, toward his bishop, toward his clergy, toward himself, toward his parishioners, and toward his church. The constraining factors that formed *bons curés* in France’s seventeenth-century seminaries help explain why the sacramental exclusion of actors resonated with reform-minded priests on both

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ends of the ecclesiastical hierarchy; why seminary-trained priests like Barmondière chose to refuse sacraments to actors even though his contemporaries in other Parisian parishes did not do the same, and why seminary-affiliated priests who rose to the episcopacy, like Vialart and Pavillon, would list actors as public sinners even though they ruled in dioceses that lacked thriving public theaters.

Seminaries defined the *bon curé* both by what he was and what he was not. Ceremonial expertise and sacramental discipline constituted two of the most readily visible signs that a priest was conforming to the positive content outlined by the ideal of the *bon curé*. As described in a seminary pamphlet titled “Les principaux devoirs d’un bon curé” (The principal duties of a good parish priest), the first four duties fulfilled by a good parish priest in relation to God – prayer, continual awareness of God’s presence, devotion toward Jesus-Christ in the Eucharist, and living in a state of grace through penance – concerned predominantly interior actions, hidden from all but God’s eyes.⁹⁸ A good parish priest’s ceremonial duties toward God bore outer witness to the *bon curé*’s inner work. In the fifth and sixth duties toward God, the pamphlet associates devotion – one of the hidden aspect of a priest’s inner work – to ceremonial precision:

5. He must administer the Sacraments with dignity, & with great devotion: practicing religiously all the rubrics and ceremonies contained in the Manual for his diocese.

6. He must say his Divine Office and celebrate the Holy Mass with the greatest preparation, attention, and devotion that he can, observing exactly all the rubrics of the Breviary and Missal of his diocese, and the hours assigned for the Office, as much as possible.⁹⁹

Whereas fellow priests and parishioners could only infer the quality of a *curé*’s prayer life from what he said and did – from secondary effects they could attribute to a priest’s prayers – anyone familiar with the Ritual, Missal, or Breviary could gauge a priest’s ceremonial competency. Well-conducted ceremonies and properly constructed sacraments thus stood in metonymically for a more holistic understanding of holiness. This had two consequences. First, the kinds of experimentation and innovation that reshaped the sacrament of penance, occasionally to the detriment of actors, in the mid-seventeenth century could only occur when the innovators believed they were working, as Bourdoise put it, “from within the hierarchy.” Innovation arose out of the quest for precise application, not out of a search for something new. Second, a parish priest could not construct himself as a *bon curé* without a minimal degree of performance skill.

However, the *bon curé*’s performance skills had to fall within a certain range. Seminary retreats, devotional exercises, and *règlements* figured actors as the counter-model for the *bon curé* and posited theatrical abstinence as a rejection of all that a priest should not be. In the previous chapter of this dissertation I have tried to sketch the crucial differences between liturgical and theatrical spectacle. Here, my objective is to show how seminary activities kneaded an allergy for the theater into the clerical identity adopted by seminarians who crafted themselves as “good parish priests.” The *bon curé* possessed an anti-theater reflex. Nonetheless, he did not

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necessarily possess an antitheatrical discourse; at least, not until the end of the century when Pierre Le Brun, a liturgy professor at the Seminary of Saint-Magloire, authored an antitheatrical text in response to the Caffaro affair and presented it as a lecture in one of the seminary’s conferences. Although when a theater polemic burst onto France’s literary scene seminaries provided a venue, as Le Brun’s lecture suggests, for the airing of ecclesiastical opinions about the theater, the way seminaries instilled in young clerics an opposition between the bon curé and the actor aimed not so much at impeding theatrical activities in the kingdom as at preventing priests from attending the theater. Seminary retreats and rules drew a line in the sand between liturgical and theatrical spectacles by instituting a firm boundary between priests and actors.

The anti-theater reflex that structured, through negation, the ideal of the bon curé was already woven into short pre-ordination retreats organized by Vincent de Paul in the late 1620s and early 1630s. These ten day retreats, known as the Retraites des ordinands, or Ordinand Retreats, paved the way for the seminaries founded in Paris in the early 1640s. Antoine Degert and Gérard Carroll both see seminaries like Saint-Sulpice and Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet as merely extending the concept of the spiritual retreat. During the ten days of the retreat, clerics preparing for ordination lived together in community, participating in two entretiens, or instructional sessions, per day – one in the morning and one in the afternoon – and learning practical skills like how to pray and how to conduct the sacraments. Lessons on impediments to the priesthood occupied the first two mornings of the retreat, and classified acting as an “irregularity,” or one of the forms of censure that prevented a man from entering the priesthood. “Irregularity is an ecclesiastical impediment by which a person is rendered incapable of receiving [holy] orders, or executing them having received them,” began the lesson. The notion of irregularity marked all that followed as the antithesis of the good parish priest.

Although the lesson did not refer to actors as public sinners, it grouped them with blasphemers and bankers, and thus with the same characters who figured in the lists of public sinners published in the Roman Ritual and in the 1643 edition of Borromeo’s Acta. Two manuscripts conserved at the Archives of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice in Paris as Ms. 157 and Ms. 158 – the evening lessons and morning lessons respectively – contain a version of the entretiens that Gérard Carroll, after carefully examining all the surviving copies, deemed “close to the primitive texts.” The entretien on irregularity, recorded in manuscript 158, divided this...

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100 In 1694, playwright Edmé Boursault published a collection of plays prefaced by an apology for the theater titled “Lettre d’un théologien illustre par sa qualité et par son mérite, consulté par l’auteur pour savoir si la comédie peut être permise ou doit être absolument défendue” or “Letter from a theologian illustrious by his quality and merit, consulted by the author to know whether the theater can be permitted or whether it must be absolutely prohibited.” This preface generated a flurry of controversy, and the debates that ensued are usually referred to as the “Caffaro affaire” after the preface’s author, a monk named Father Caffaro. See Bossuet, “Maximes et réflexions sur la comédie”; Le Brun, Discours sur la comédie, où on voit la réponse au théologien qui la défend, avec l’Histoire du théâtre, & les sentiments des docteurs de l’Eglise depuis le premier siècle jusqu’à présent.

101 Degert, Histoire des séminaires français, 1:7–11; Some early seminary experiments were called “Séminaires des Ordinands.” On the distinction between seminaries and retreats, see Carroll, Un Portrait du prêtre, 1:54–57.

102 Carroll, Un Portrait du prêtre, 1:73.


104 Paul V, Rituale romanum, Pauli V. Pont (Antuerpiæ: Ex Officina Plantiniana, Apud Balthasarem & Ioannem Moretos, 1617), 70; Borromaei, Acta ecclesiae mediolanensis, 396.

105 “Entretiens des ordinands sur les matieres de devotion” (Paris, n.d.), Ms. 157, SS; “Entretiens des ordinands (SS Ms. 158)”; Carroll published a transcription of Ms. 158, the “entretiens du matin” or morning lesson, in Carroll, Un
impediment to the priesthood into two kinds, “those which stem from defaults, and those that stem from sins.”\(^{106}\) Seven defaults, presented as intrinsic to the person, ensued: 1) mental defaults like lunacy, 2) physical defaults like deformity, 3) defaults of birth like illegitimacy, 4) defaults of reputation like criminality, 5) defaults of age like childhood, 6) sacramental defaults like having a second marriage, and 7) defaults of gentleness like cruelty.\(^{107}\) Actors appeared under the fourth type of default, defined as defaults of reputation or “defaults of good renown.” These defaults concerned the interface between an individual and the public, either in the sense of that which is shared or common to all, like “catholic” religion or the public purse, or in the sense of that which all could see, like performers who set up stages in public squares and fairs:

Defaults of good renown, like when a person is accused, convicted, or condemned of some enormous crime, like the sacrilegious, public usurers, actors (comédiens), wandering entertainers (baladins), and others.\(^{108}\)

Given that defaults of reputation followed on the heels of irregularities arising from qualities like age, intelligence, and birth, the lesson framed the publicness that accrued to stage performers as inseparable from their bodies and persons, like a birth defect. The fact that defaults of reputation preceded defaults of gentleness in the list trained young clerics to think of acting as grievous to almost the same degree as the crimes that exemplified cruelty, like killing and execution. By classifying acting as an irregularity, the lesson cast stage performance as a naturalized obstacle to the priesthood, on par with insanity and physical disability.

In order to prompt ordinands to absorb the lesson’s contents, the entretien concluded with a series of practical applications. These practical applications embedded the anti-theater reflex into the heart of clerics by teaching them to watch out for theater-induced defaults in themselves and others. In doing so, the lesson on irregularity attuned clergymen to the kinds of exclusionary actions that would follow from the absolute barrier drawn between stage performers and men aspiring to the priesthood. “Be on guard if we are in one of these impediments so that … we can declare it to he who leads us [spiritual director], such that he can give us some expedient to clear us of it, or advise us to withdraw [from ordination],” instructed the entretien.\(^{109}\) The lesson then advised ordinands to interrogate penitents when hearing their confessions so as to discover “whether he is tied to some censure,” and to preach at every opportunity “what excommunication is, the harm that comes to those who let themselves be excommunicated, and how they are deprived of the Church’s treasures…”\(^{110}\) Through instruction

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\(^{106}\) “Entretiens des ordinands (SS Ms. 158),” 17r: (“Elle se divise en celle qui provient des deffaults, et celle qui provient des pechez”).

\(^{107}\) “Entretiens des ordinands (SS Ms. 158),” 17r–18v.

\(^{108}\) “Entretiens des ordinands (SS Ms. 158),” 17v: (“desfaults de bonne renommee, cõe qd une personne e accusee, convaincue et condamnee de quelque crime enorme, comme les sacrileges, les usuriers publics, les comédiens, baladins, et autres”).

\(^{109}\) “Entretiens des ordinands (SS Ms. 158),” 20r: (“prendre garde si on è dans quelqu'un de ces empeschemens affin que si cela estoit on le declare a celuy qui nous conduit affin qu'il nous donne quelqu'expedient pour nous en faire quitte, ou nous donne advis de nous retirer, au cas que cela ne se puisse”).

\(^{110}\) “Entretiens des ordinands (SS Ms. 158),” 20r–21r: (“quand on entend les confessions interroger le poenitent s'il n'est point lie de lie de quelqu'censure;” “prescher ... ce que c'est que l’excommunication, les dommages qui arrivent a ceux qui se laissent excommunier comme ils sont privez des tresors de l’Eglise”).
and practical application, the retraites des ordinands instilled in Parisian clergymen the idea that stage performance was “irregular,” taboo, a state of being to be avoided at all costs.

If the evidence provided by Carroll holds, then manuscripts 157 and 158 exerted a significant influence over priestly formation in Paris during the years just before the first anti-actor Rituals appeared. According to Carroll, Olier and Pavillon helped compose these manuscripts. Working closely with Vincent de Paul as well as Antoine Godeau and François Perrochel in 1634 or 1635, Olier and Pavillon intended these manuscripts as a manual that future retreat leaders could memorize or follow.111 Vincent de Paul led the first retraite des ordinands in the diocese of Beauvais in September of 1628, with the help of two priests from Bourdoise’s nascent seminary.112 The archbishop of Paris, inspired by the example at Beauvais, instituted mandatory pre-ordination retreats in his city in 1631, where Vincent de Paul and his Congregation of the Mission hosted the ordinands free of charge.113 Whereas the first Parisian pre-ordination retreats were mandatory only for clerics from the capitol who were preparing for sacred orders (the sub-deaconate, the deaconate, or the priesthood), in 1639 the archbishop required that clerics affiliated with other dioceses but residing in Paris participate as well, and in 1647 he extended the requirement to clerics entering the minor orders, or lowest ranks in the ecclesiastical hierarchy (porter, lector, exorcist, and acolyte).114 Thus the manuals prepared by Olier, Pavillon, and their collaborators toward the end of 1635 structured the basic priestly formation received by all clergymen who lived in or passed through Paris during the second half of the seventeenth century, even if they never entered a seminary for anything more than a ten-day retreat.

The rules, or règlements, that organized daily life in the Seminaries of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet and Saint-Sulpice reinforced the theater taboo constructed through the notion of irregularity during the retreats. The seminary regulations composed for the men living and studying at Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet flatly stated, “It has always been prohibited for clerics from the Community and Seminary of Saint Nicolas to attend plays [comedies] and other public spectacles of this nature because ordinarily they are contrary to Christian piety and dignity of character.”115 The règlements for the seminary of Saint-Sulpice went further, listing theater

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111 The manual was never published, but copies circulated in manuscript form. See Carroll, Un Portrait du prêtre, 1:90.
112 According to Louys Abbély, the Bishop of Rodez, the priests from Bourdoise’s nascent seminary and priestly community were “Messieurs Messier & Duchesne, Docteurs de la Faculté de Paris.” Abelly indicates that de Paul gave the lesson on the ten commandments, which suggests that either Messier and Duchesne gave the lesson on irregularity. See Louys Abelly, La Vie du Venerable Serviteur de Dieu Vincent de Paul, Institueur et Premier Superieur General de la Congregation de la Mission, vol. 1 (Paris: Chez Florentin Lambert, rue Saint Jacques, devant saint Yves, à l’Image saint Paul, 1664), 116–119; See also Broutin, La Réforme pastorale en France au XVIIe siècle, 2:217.
113 The archbishop’s original plan was to entrust the retreats to Bourdoise at the Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet. The seminary’s buildings were too small, and so the archbishop assigned the retreats to Vincent de Paul’s Congregation of the Mission instead, which occupied the spacious buildings of a former school, known as the College des Bons-Enfants. Vincent de Paul, already committed to one of his other missions, did not lead the first retreat in Paris. According to Carroll, Jérôme Duchesne oversaw the first Parisian retreat. According to Schenker, M. Hallier, one of the other priests from Bourdoise’s community who had a doctorate, led the first retreate. See Carroll, Un Portrait du prêtre, 1:73; Schenker, Histoire du Séminaire de Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet, 1:104–105.
114 Broutin, La Réforme pastorale en France au XVIIe siècle, 2:218.
115 “Règlements du séminaire de Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet (AN MM 476),” 68: (“Il a toujours esté defendi aux Ecclesiastiques de la Communauté et Seminaire de St. Nicolas d’assister aux comedies et autres spectacles
attendance among the first type of “Faults for which one can be excluded from the seminary.”

The first entry under the category of faults worthy of expulsion and taking place outside the seminary house stated:

Going to public places such as 1. Places of debauchery, 2. Places for public gambling, farce, bowling, billiards, etc., 3. Places of public entertainment, balls, plays, operas, etc.

A seminarian who did not attend the theater but read plays also risked expulsion. The third entry under faults committed on seminary grounds for which one could be expelled listed “teaching or holding a bad doctrine, reading, carrying or wanting to keep bad books, romances, plays, defamatory libels, or other [books] against morals, religion, or the state.” Rules of this kind flipped the terms of the actors-cannot-become-priests prohibition so that priests could not watch actors.

Devotional practices wove this prohibition into the young cleric’s spiritual formation. A set of daily self examinations credited to Olier and used by seminarians at Saint-Sulpice enjoined them, for example, to meditate on the “games and entertainments of ecclesiastics.”

The exercise begins, “Let us adore the infinite bounty of God for the clergy in the care he takes to determine \(\text{régler}\) for clerics all their steps right down to their games and entertainments,” followed by the prompt, “Let us examine whether we have kept the six rules given by the Canons and Councils regarding their games and entertainments.”

The text then proposes a series of questions for seminarians to ask themselves, the first two sets of which pertain to the theater. The attitudes woven into these questions intensify as the self-examination proceeds and foster what Olier would have considered a righteous repugnance for theatrical activities. They read:

Have we abstained ourselves from that which [the Canons and Councils] prohibit, like balls games, cards, dice, etc., from games of chance and all that which shocks clerical seemliness and honesty?... Have we also avoided the hunt, fairs, and all those spectacles and concerts of profane music and entertainments of the like that are only good for...
distracting the spirit, moving the passions, softening the heart and usually for extinguishing devotion and entirely corrupting morals?\textsuperscript{121}

The self-examination continues with questions that urge the seminarians to impress upon and reinforce these same attitudes in their fellow priests, asking first “If we have been faithful to deprive ourselves of these prohibited games and entertainments,” and then “have we been [faithful] enough to in no way approve them in other clerics, to never find ourselves there, to not put up with them at all, especially in our houses, so as to not contribute to them in any manner?”\textsuperscript{122} These self-examinations, which began and ended in prayer, were just one of several key practices repeated on a regular basis and aimed at creating what Olier, Bourdoise, and other priests of their time had begun to call a “clerical spirit,” or esprit ecclésiastique, a term that described the attitude proper to a bon curé. As the self-examinations reflect, seminary founders thought rejecting the theater constituted one recognizable feature of this clerical spirit. Theatrical abstinence distinguished the good parish priest from pretenders. Likewise, because seminaries used a priest-actor opposition to structure the bon curé’s ecclesiastical identity, seminary-trained priests who embraced the clerical model promoted by their teachers had an extra incentive to differentiate themselves from stage performers by excluding them from the sacraments.

In addition to forming a type of churchmen whose ecclesiastical identity made him particularly responsive to Episcopal instructions and prone to think of actors as the priesthood’s criminal mirror image, France’s seminaries placed priests in circulation. As seminary-trained priests circulated to found seminaries or assume ecclesiastical offices, ideas, ceremonial practices, and texts circulated too. In a handwritten document composed in the early 1640s titled “Dessein du seminaire,” or “Plan for the Seminary,” Olier envisioned his seminary and society as a hub for inter-diocesan collaborations:

During the Mass the goodness of God made me see the plan that the plan he had for this house is like he desired that it was an apostolic house in which there are people that I can send to bishops to found and establish seminaries … after which they will return to the house or be sent elsewhere for the good of the Church…\textsuperscript{123}

In addition to sending priests to help found seminaries, between 1642 and 1790 the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice produced 250 bishops, or “approximately a third of the bishops who, from 1650 to 1850, shared the dioceses of France.”\textsuperscript{124} While the third of French bishops formed at Saint-

\textsuperscript{121} Examens particuliers, 336–338: (“1. Nous sommes-nous abstenus de ceux qu’ils nous défendent, comme sont les jeux de mail, de cartes, de dez, &c. de tous les jeux de hazard, & de tous ceux qui choquent l’honnêteté ou la bienveillance Ecclesiastiques?... Avons-nous aussi évité la chasse, les foires, les balets, les danses, les tournois, les Comedies, les farces, & tous ces spectacles & ces concerts de Musique profane & semblables divertissements qui ne sont propres qu’à distraire l’esprit, à émouvoir les passions, à amollir le coeur, & ordinairement même à éteindre la devotion & à corrompre entièrement les mœurs?”).

\textsuperscript{122} Examens particuliers, 338: (“Si nous avons été fidèles pour nous priver de ces jeux & de ces divertissements défendus, l’avons-nous été assez pour ne les point approuver dans les Ecclesiastiques, pour ne nous y trouver jamais, pour ne les point souffrir, surtout dans nos maisons, pour n’y contribuer en aucune manière?”).

\textsuperscript{123} Olier, “Divers écrits, tome I (SS Ms. 14),” 61: (“Et dans la Messe la bonte de DIEU me fait voir le dessein qu’il avoit sur cette maison est coé il desiroit que ce fut une maison apostolique en la quelle il y eut des personnes que je puisse envoyer avec des Evesques pour y fonder et etablir des seminaires ... apres quoy ils retournouront a la maison ou seront envoyez ailleurs pour le bien de l’Eglise...”).

Sulpice did not overlap exactly with the third of French diocesan Rituals that refused sacraments to actors, what we would now call the Sulpician alumni network exerted an important influence over the French episcopacy. Adrien Bourdoise, the founder of the seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet, also sent priests from his Parisian seminary to the provinces to aid bishops. Therefore, while seminary founders depicted bishops as kings to whom priests owed absolute obedience, seminary founders also positioned themselves as king makers.

Dubu’s survey of Rituals identified twenty-one bishops – some of them issued multiple editions of their diocesan Rituals – who classified actors as public sinners. An extended study of the movement of seminary personnel back and forth among the dioceses in which bishops refused sacraments to actors would be well worth undertaking. As a first step toward a fuller investigation, two of the bishops from Dubu’s list make suitable case studies. Vialart de Herse, as already suggested, provides an interesting case in that he refused sacraments to actors before any of his peers and before the institutional events and social debates of mid-century that no doubt helped to incline bishops toward a harsher stance against actors during the late seventeenth century, namely the Assembly of French Clergy’s decision in 1655 to publish Charles Borromeo’s Institutions des confesseurs, the literary polemics about the theater that pitted Pierre Nicole against Jean Racine in the mid-1660s, and the Caffaro affair in 1694. Likewise, Jean-Baptiste de la Croix de Chevrères de Saint-Vallier, the bishop of Québec from 1688 to 1713, makes an interesting case study. As the first bishop to refuse sacraments to actors in New France, his story foregrounds how the upward cycle of liturgical transmission that carried the sacramental refusal of actors from ceremonial innovation to diocesan Ritual in the 1640s gave way to a top-down movement by the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The Rituals of Vialart and Saint-Vallier demonstrate the influence of France’s early seminaries on bishops. They both received their earliest sacerdotal formation at the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice or, as in Vialart’s case, in the milieu out of which Saint-Sulpice developed, and both immediately plunged into seminary foundation or administration upon ascending to their Episcopal seats. Vialart’s ecclesiastical preparation placed him in contact with the French clergymen clustered around Pierre de Bérulle and the French Oratory, a group out of which France’s best-known seminary founders emerged. During the period immediately before he was appointed as the bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne in 1640, Vialart de Herse participated in a series of ecclesiastical conferences given by Jean Eudes at Saint-Magloire, the seminary that the bishop of Paris had entrusted to the French Oratory, a group out of which France’s best-known seminary founders emerged. During the period immediately before he was appointed as the bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne in 1640, Vialart de Herse participated in a series of ecclesiastical conferences given by Jean Eudes at Saint-Magloire, the seminary that the bishop of Paris had entrusted to the French Oratory. It was through this nascent network of seminary-founding priests that Vialart obtained entry to the Episcopacy. After assuming his seat as bishop in 1642, one of Vialart’s first actions was the foundation of a seminary. Although the seminary grew gradually, opening its doors fully in 1646, the year of his installation Vialart

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125 The short list of cities with bourdoisien seminaries includes: Senlis (1622), Chartres (1628), Beauvais (1631), Arles (1634), Bourges (1635), Reims, Limoges, Bordeaux (1640), Laon (1641), Angoulême (1642), Châlons (1643), Coutances (1648), Nantes, Séez, Tréguier (1655), as well as Villejuif, Noyon, Évreux, and Lyon, for which Broutin does not list dates. See Broutin, La Réforme pastorale en France au XVIIe siècle, 2:202.

126 Goujet, La Vie de messire Felix Vialart de Herse, 15.

127 Eudes, dissatisfied with the still-tentative state of the Oratory’s Parisian seminary and their seminary endeavors in general, would leave in 1643 to found his own seminary in Caen. See Broutin, La Réforme pastorale en France au XVIIe siècle, 2:286–289; However, while Eudes was still active at Saint-Magloire the Cardinal Richelieu approached him and asked Eudes to recommend clergymen from his conferences who would make good bishops. Eudes recommended Vialart, who was subsequently named by Richelieu to the bishopric. Richelieu first named Vialart de Herse to the office of Coadjutor to the standing bishop, Henri Clausse. Clausse died six months later, at which point Richelieu appointed Vialart as bishop. Goujet, La Vie de messire Felix Vialart de Herse, 16–17.
purchased a house for it in Châlons. Nor was Vialart’s commitment to seminary foundation limited to financing buildings. In order to achieve greater involvement in the formation of the clergy for his diocese, Vialart decided to live at the seminary. Vialart’s exposure to seminary founders and personal efforts to found a seminary therefore preceded his publication of a Ritual, as well as his association with Jansenism which, if one were to adopt Dubu’s interpretive framework, would be the likeliest cause for a bishop’s anti-actor policies. The chronology of Vialart’s case suggests that his interest in providing his diocese with well-trained clergymen, an objective he pursued first by founding a seminary and then by publishing a Ritual, arose not from a prescient attachment to Jansenism but from a more practical desire to form priests in the image of the bon curé after having embraced the bon curé as an ideal during his encounters with Bérulle, Vincent de Paul, and Eudes. The catechism he issued in 1660 even included a “Treatise on the duties of a good parish priest.”

In light of Vialart’s ties to the French Oratory and the seminary founders in Paris, a distinct possibility exists that Vialart’s Ritual, by listing actors as public sinners, synthesized the entretien on irregularity and the sacramental refusal of 1647, transforming these ceremonial innovations into their implied ecclesiastical prescription. This hypothesis remains unconfirmed, but three pieces of evidence make it worth entertaining: Vialart’s relationship to Olier, the circulation of priests from Bourdoise’s seminary of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet in Châlons, and the delegation of the 1649 Ritual’s composition. Vialart had personal and ecclesiastical ties to Olier. They were cousins and prior to participating in Eudes’ conferences, Vialart had accompanied Olier on at least two missions in the provinces, one in Bretagne in 1638 and another in the diocese of Chartre at the château owned by Vialart’s mother. In Paris in 1640, Vialart and Olier both belonged to the ecclesiastical circle that orbited the French Oratory, where Vialart attended Eudes’ conferences and where Olier found his new spiritual director, the Oratory’s superior general, Charles de Condren. In fact, the Cardinal Richelieu appointed Vialart to the Coadjutory and subsequently to the Episcopal seat at Châlons only after Olier

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129 Vialart lived at the seminary for the last 20 years of his life. See Moréri, Le Grand dictionnaire historique, 10:573.
130 Later in his career, Vialart did have a Jansenist reputation, but he published his first diocesan Ritual, as indicated above, in 1649, whereas his decisively Jansenist activity dated from almost two decades later when between 1667 and 1669 he helped mediate a conflict between the Pope and four of France’s Jansenist-leaning bishops. See Jacques Forget, “Jansenius and Jansenism,” The Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08285a.htm; The timing of Vialart’s participation in Eude’s conferences is also important in relation to Vialart’s later Jansenism. The conferences predated the period during which Jansenist thought began to exert an influence upon the French Oratory, which Emile Georges places at roughly 1640-1642. See Emile Georges, Saint Jean Eudes, missionnaire apostolique, instituteur de la congrégation de Jésus et Marie, de l’ordre de Notre-Dame de Charité du Refuge et du Bon-Pasteur, et de la société du Coeur de la Mère Admirable, père, docteur et apôtre du culte liturgique des Sacrés Coeurs de Jésus et de Marie (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1925), 64; Cited by Brouin, La Réforme pastorale en France au XVIIe siècle, 2:283–284.
131 For a discussion and excerpts of the “Traité des devoirs du bon curé,” see Brouin, La Réforme pastorale en France au XVIIe siècle, 1:227–230.
133 Before submitting himself to Charles de Condren’s direction, Olier’s spiritual director had been Vincent de Paul. See Baudrand, “Mémoire sur la vie de M. Olier et sur le séminaire de Saint-Sulpice,” 378–379.
turned the office down in 1639 in favor of starting his seminary. Vialart had sufficiently close ties with Olier, as well as convergent interest since they both ran seminaries, so as to want to keep apprised of ceremonial innovations at Saint-Sulpice.

News about the refusal of the Viaticum to an actor in 1647 could have also spread to Châlons via Bourdoise. After receiving the coadjutorship, Vialart invited Bourdoise to found an ecclesiastical community in Soudé, a parish near the city of Châlons-sur-Marne. Bourdoise, unwell, could not move to Soudé, but he drew up the règlements for the community. Then in 1642, Bourdoise sent three priests from his Parisian community to Châlons to help Vialart found his seminary. Vialart named one of these priests, M. le Pelletier, his Vicar General. Pelletier reported to Bourdoise about the seminary’s progress and, according to Broutin, imparted a Bourdoisian flavor to the reforms undertaken by Vialart. Finally, according to Goujet, the bishop of Châlons did not compose his Ritual himself but rather “charged several capable people, well instructed in good Theology, Christian morals, and ecclesiastical rites, to compose a Ritual.”

The case of Saint-Vallier suggests that the Sulpician innovation in regards to actors grew more exaggerated at a distance and acquired more of a top-down dynamic as the century progressed. His Ritual expressed the intensity of Saint-Vallier’s aggression toward the theater. Whereas Vialart only explicitly excluded comédiens from communion, Saint-Vallier’s Ritual excluded farceurs as well. “[P]arish priests must refuse the sacraments to all public sinners, such as … actors and farce players,” his Ritual declared. The fact that Saint-Vallier took preemptive action against theatrical activities in his diocese suggests the top-down character of his Episcopal instructions. Although Saint-Vallier did not publish his Ritual until 1703, he set out to eradicate theatrical performances in Québec as soon as he arrived on Canada’s shores. Admitted to the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice by Olier’s third successor, Louis Tronson, on December 22, 1680 and ordained the following year, Saint-Vallier’s formation at Saint-Sulpice corresponded to a period of intensified disputes between Sulpician priests and the actors who lived in their parish.

135 Descourveaux, La vie de monsieur Bourdoise, 394.
137 Broutin, La Réforme pastorale en France au XVIIe siècle, 1:218.
138 Goujet, La Vie de messire Felix Vialart de Herse, 82: (“il chargea plusieurs personnes habiles, & très instruites de la bonne Théologie, de la Morale chrétienne & des Rits ecclesiastiques de composer un Rituel”).
139 According to Dubu, the above statement can be found at Jean-Baptiste de la Croix de Chevrières de Saint-Vallier, Rituel du diocese de Quebec: publié par l’ordre de Monseigneur de Saint Valier, évêque de Quebec (Paris: Simon Langlois, rue Saint Etienne des Grès, au bon Pasteur, 1703), 10; See the Dubu’s note in the column titled “Mentions Spéciales” in Dubu, “Le Rituel roman et les rituel des diocèses de France au XVIIe siècle,” 92: (les cures doivent refuser les sacrements à tous les pécheurs publics comme sont (…) les comédiens et farceurs”).
140 On Saint-Vallier’s ecclesiastical chronology, see Eugene Levesque, “Liste des anciens élèves du séminaire de Saint-Sulpice, 1642-1792,” Bulletin trimestriel des anciens élèves de Saint-Sulpice (1905): 223; See also the letter written by Tronson to Saint-Vallier on 2 February 1682 to congratulate him on his ordination, as well as the
Saint-Vallier may very well have brought ideas about the theater with him to Saint-Sulpice, since he had served as the Canon at the Cathedral in Grenoble and also spent two years in a monastery before entering the seminary, but his stay at Saint-Sulpice would have reinforced whatever convictions he already had about the theater. Nor would Saint-Vallier’s trans-Atlantic journey have weakened his ties to the seminary when he finished his studies. In 1657, four Sulpician priests from the seminary in Paris had arrived at Ville-Marie and established a mission and seminary in what is now Montréal. Between 1678 and 1836 – thus both before and after Saint-Vallier’s episcopacy – the Bishop of Québec’s vicar-general for the district of Montréal was the superior of the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice of Montréal.

Québec did not have a professional theater during Saint-Vallier’s episcopacy, but the French elites in New France, many of whom had been educated in the homeland, frequently produced and performed in plays for their own entertainment. These performances often featured “the best plays from the French repertoire,” including Corneille’s Cid and Nicomède, and Racine’s Mithridate. Like nobles and men of state in France, Québec’s governors hosted some of the most lavish theatrical productions at their official residence, the Château Saint-Louis. According to Auguste Gosselin, during Saint-Vallier’s first trip to Québec in 1685, he addressed a series of ecclesiastical recommendations to the new governor, Jacques-René de Brisay de Denonville, the Marquis de Denonville, concerning he and his wife’s “obligation” to “give a good example to the people.” Saint-Vallier’s Episcopal advice included a series of instructions “touching feasts, balls and dances, plays (les comédies) and other declamations, luxurious clothing and nudity, [and] the irreverence that is committed in churches.” Directed first and foremost for the conduct acceptable for the governor’s daughter, Saint-Vallier’s recommendations gave voice to a desire to make New France into a purified version of the old world, a land in which the theater – already intractable in France – should not take root.


141 According to Bertrand, 26 seminarians who passed through Saint-Sulpice during Louis Tronson’s tenure went on to become bishops. It would be interesting to compare the Rituals issued by Sulpician-trained bishops to gain a more complete understanding of how doctrines and practices circulated through seminary networks. For a list of the 26 bishops and the dates they entered the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice during the 1670s and 1680s, see note 1 in Tronson, Correspondance de M. Louis Tronson, 3:438–439.


143 Deslandres, Dickinson, and Hubert, Les Sulpi ciens de Montréal, 36.


145 Corneille’s Cid was performed as early as 1646. Gosselin, “Un Épisode de l’Histoire du théâtre au Canada (1694),” 53–56, 60: (“des meilleurs pièces du répertoire français”).

146 Gosselin, “Un Épisode de l’Histoire du théâtre au Canada (1694),” 56: (The recommendations were titled “l’obligation où ils sont de donner le bon exemple au peuple”).

147 Gosselin, “Un Épisode de l’Histoire du théâtre au Canada (1694),” 56: (“touchant les festins, le bal et la danse, les comédies et autres déclamations, le luxe des habits et les nudités, les irrévérences qui se commettent dans les églises”).
The bishop’s reasons for wanting the governor’s daughter to abstain from the stage included the central strains of anti-theater anxiety that found expression in France’s theater polemics during the second half of the seventeenth century. These anxieties operated under the notions of modesty, mimicry, gender, and sexual passion, but revolved around the issue of public appearance, of a private person making herself public by exposing herself before a crowd: “We do not believe … that it is seemly to the profession of Christianity to permit her the liberty to represent a character from a play (personnage de comédie), and to appear before the world like an actress declaiming verses, however holy their content might be; and we believe even less good that one allows boys to declaim with girls.”

For Saint-Vallier, however, the governor’s daughter embodied the colony’s relation to the theater. If she performed:

That would be to renew here, without thinking about it, the usage of the theater and of plays (de la comédie), which are as or even more dangerous than balls and dances, and against which the disorders which have occurred in the past have given cause to cry out with vehemence.

If the governor’s daughter took to the stage, New France would simultaneously appear before the rest of the world stained by the theater.

Denonville and his wife observed Saint-Vallier’s advice. Denonville’s successor, Louis de Buade, comte de Frontenac, did not. It seems that Saint-Vallier’s Ritual responded, at least in part, to the Frontenac’s theatrical patronage, which was particularly extravagant during the winter of 1694. After a season of plays at the Château Saint-Louis in January, rumors spread that Frontenac was preparing a production of Molière’s Le Tartuffe that would feature a protestant actor as Tartuffe. In order to stop the play’s production, Saint-Vallier escalated the authority and publicness of his ecclesiastical texts against the theater. First, instead of sending a private letter to the governor, he took to the pulpit by authoring a sermon against plays, which he ordered a priest named Glandelet to preach in the church located in the most populous part of town.

Then on January 16, 1694, Saint-Vallier issued two mandements, or official letters addressed by a bishop to his diocese. In the first, titled “A Pastoral on Impious Discourses,” he threatened the production’s actor, Jacques-Théodore Cosineau de Mareuil, with major excommunication and commanded the priests in Québec to “refuse him at the holy table.” In other words, Saint-Vallier ordered the clergymen in his diocese to treat Mareuil as a public sinner. The second mandement, titled “A Pastoral on the Subject of Plays,” presented in print form, and with greater ecclesiastical weight and a wider circulation, a version of the sermon preached the previous Sunday. The bishop succeeded in stopping the production, and even managed to have Mareuil

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148 Quoted by Gosselin, “Un Épisode de l’Histoire du théâtre au Canada (1694),” 56: (“On ne croit pas … qu’il soit bienséant à la profession du christianisme de lui permettre la liberté de représenter un personnage de comédie, et de paraître devant le monde comme une actrice en déclamant des vers, quelque sainte qu’en puisse être la matière; et bien moins encore croit-on qu’on doive souffrir que des garçons déclament avec des filles”).

149 Quoted by Gosselin, “Un Épisode de l’Histoire du théâtre au Canada (1694),” 56: (“Ce serait renouveler ici sans y penser l’usage du théâtre et de la comédie, ou autant ou plus dangereuse que le bal et la danse, et contre laquelle les déordres qui en sont arrivés autrefois ont donné lieu d’invectiver avec beaucoup de véhémence”).


put in prison for a month and a half, but the incident embittered his relations with the inhabitants of Québec, who complained to the king and procured Saint-Vallier’s departure to France.\footnote{Marueuil was in prison from 14 October 1694 to 29 November 1694. See Gosselin, “Un Épisode de l’Histoire du théâtre au Canada (1694),” 66–71; On Saint-Vallier’s ecclesiastical exile, see Lionel Lindsay, “Jean-Baptiste de Saint-Vallier,” The Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13387a.htm; Henry Arthur Scott, “Quebec” (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12593c.htm; And Robert Choquette, Canada’s Religions: An Historical Introduction (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2004), 119–120.}

Captured by the English on his way back from Rome, Saint-Vallier issued his Ritual from captivity, no doubt still irked by Frontenac’s attempted Tartuffe.\footnote{Saint-Vallier was retained in France (although he was allowed to make a trip to Rome) from 1694 to 1697. He returned briefly to Québec from 1697 to 1701, when he made another trip to Rome. It was during the return voyage from this trip that he was captured by the English. See Lindsay, “Jean-Baptiste de Saint-Vallier.”} Published in Paris and then circulated in New France, Saint-Vallier’s Ritual, like his own peregrinations and anti-theater efforts, demonstrate the pathways for people and texts forged by France’s early seminaries.

**Ritual Activation**

The Ritual’s status as a ceremonial object recasts the anti-actor action that punctuated France’s moral quarrel about the theater in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Whereas scholarship has tended to treat Rituals as closed, prescriptive texts imposed upon a diocese by Jansenist-inspired bishops, the Ritual’s ceremonial function when deployed in sacramental situations in fact made it an open, dynamic object. The Ritual’s capacity to activate and be activated by the priest who carried it and the other people and objects he involved in a sacrament enabled it to serve as a mediating agent between parish level ceremonial practice and Episcopal prescription. Seminary pedagogy amplified the Ritual’s mediating agency by developing both its activating and normalizing functions. A tight association between a priest’s body and the pages of the Ritual deepened its agential force, while an emphasis on following the Ritual’s contents religiously enhanced its regulatory authority.

When examined in the context of seminary education, Rituals thus bear witness to liturgical transformation in seventeenth-century France as a reciprocal process entailing not only a top-down, policy-setting drive but also a creative upward movement through which lower clergy on the front lines of the Catholic reformation arranged and rearranged their ceremonial repertoires so as to adequately confront parishioner behavior they considered conducive to sin. This improvisational activity unfolded within limits set by the stories and instructions that depicted figures like Charles Borromeo as models, by the priestly identity constructed through seminary formation, and through coincidental factors like what kinds of activities people in a given parish enjoyed. France’s ecclesiastical action against actors might not have gained a foothold if Jean-Jacques Olier had not happened to found his seminary across the street from a fair and in a zone that would later host one of Paris’s preeminent professional theaters. The interpersonal network forged as seminaries spread and seminarians acquired Episcopal seats provided avenues through which innovations that might otherwise have remained local – like refusing sacraments to actors – could spread across France and to its colonies.

Rituals activated networks, both local and global; “ritual” networks in the sacramental or liturgical sense and regime-building networks in the institutional, empire-building sense. These two types of networks converged when a priest held a Ritual in his hands. An example of each will show, by way of conclusion, how a Ritual could pass from hand, to hand, to hand, alternately activating each type of network. In a sacramental situation, a Ritual activated a micro
network binding the priests who conducted the ceremonies. Beuvelet’s instructions for the clergyman who assisted a priest in administering the last rites reveal this ritual network. Although the Ritual functioned as an extension of the priest’s hand, the assistant in fact carried it. The assistant arrived to the sacristy before the priest and gathered the Ritual and a crucifix from an armoire. He then walked in procession four paces ahead of the priest all the way to the sick person’s house, carrying the Ritual under his left arm and the cross in his right hand. The assistant thus became, with the Ritual, part of the priest’s ceremonial body. At the sick person’s home, the assistant held the Ritual every time the priest needed to read prayers from it, pointing to the correct place on the page. Via the Ritual, the assistant became a third eye for the priest. If the priest needed candlelight to better see the Ritual, the assistant held both the candle and the Ritual, passing the basin of holy water to someone else in the room rather than letting go of the Ritual. Only the priest and the ceremonial extensions of his body touched the Ritual. The Ritual ritually activated the priests who touched it during a sacrament so that they became one. When not in sacramental use, the Ritual activated an institutional network if placed in circulation, binding seminary directors, bishops, and humble clergyman together. Louis Tronson’s correspondence documents at least one instance in which a bishop sent his diocesan Ritual to another, anonymously, by sending it first to the seminary. In October of 1677, Tronson, the seminary of Saint-Sulpice’s Superior General, concluded a letter to the bishop of Arras, Guy de Sève de Rochechouart, by remarking, “I received a Ritual of Arras, which I imagine was sent on your behalf for the Monseigneur the bishop of Coutances.” That same day, Tronson passed the Ritual to a seminarian names Jullien de Lallier who, after six years at the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, was on his way back to his home diocese of Coutances to become the parish priest at Valognes. After entrusting the Ritual to Lallier, Tronson wrote the following letter to Charles-François de Loménie, the bishop of Coutances: “I placed in his hands a Ritual of Arras that I received without any letter, but that I imagine was sent to me for you.” The unexplained arrival of a Ritual activated an inter-diocesan network. The only existing copy of the Ritual, if it was the one issued by the bishop of Arras in 1675, was destroyed along with municipal library in 1915. Did it list actors as public sinners? We might never know. Nonetheless, passed from hand, to hand, to hand, the Ritual strengthened seminary ties stretching from the northernmost corners of the kingdom to its Western arm where, upon arrival, it would eventually bind hand to priestly hand at some sick person’s bedside.

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157 The following description is based on Beuvelet, *Instruction sur le manuel*, 381–382.


159 Lallier entered the seminary on 7 December 1671, was ordained a priest on 30 May 1676, and was given the Cure of Valognes in October of 1677, shortly before Tronson’s letter, which is dated October 9th. See note 2 in Tronson, *Correspondance de M. Louis Tronson*, 3:66.

160 Tronson, *Correspondance de M. Louis Tronson*, 3:66: (“Je lui ai mis entre les mains un Rituel d’Arras que j’ai reçu sans aucune lettre, mais que je m’imagine ne m’avoir été rendu que pour vous”).

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