Rubens' Unfinished Gallery of Henry IV: One Half of '*un bel composto*'

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Abstract

When considering the patronage of Maria de Medici following her return from exile in 1621, one must take into account the forty-eight monumental paintings she commissioned from Peter Paul Rubens. The contract between artist and patron specified two sets of twenty-four canvases: one dedicated to the life of Maria and the other to the life of King Henry IV. Maria intended the paintings to illustrate her continuation of the King's policies and the legitimacy of her own rule — themes that echoed her vast propaganda campaign. One reason for numerous scholarly interpretations of the Medici series is the incomplete nature of the Henry cycle. This thesis supports the idea espoused by one, and possibly two scholars (and then only in a selected fashion), that Maria and Henry's lives must be understood as unified and complementary in order to interpret the original commission correctly. Through the investigation of *all* extant material relating to the king's gallery, and how it contributes to the viewer's understanding of the Queen's gallery, as well as Maria's objectives, this idea comes into focus.

Lorsqu'on examine le patronage de Marie de Médici suivant son retour d'exil en 1621, on doit prendre en compte les quarante-huit tableaux monumentaux qu'elle a commandés de Pierre Paul Rubens. Le contrat entre l'artiste et sa patronne a fait mention explicite de deux séries de vingt-quatre toiles: l'une dédiée à la vie de Marie, l'autre à celle du roi Henri IV. Marie voulait que les tableaux illustrent sa fidélité aux politiques du roi et la légitimité de sa règne – des thèmes qui faisaient écho à sa campagne de propagande d'envergure. Le caractère inachevé du cycle concernant Henri explique en partie les nombreuses interprétations savantes des séries Médici. Ce mémoire appuie l'idée avancée par un, possiblement deux critiques (et dans ce cas seulement de façon sélective), à savoir, qu'afin d'interpréter la commission originale correctement, il faut regarder les vies de Marie et de Henri comme unies et complémentaires. Par l'examen de *toute* la documentation concernant la galerie Henri IV et de la manière dont elle contribue à la compréhension de la galerie de la reine et des visées de Marie de la part du spectateur, cette idée s'éclaircit.

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1. Introduction

Returning from exile in 1621, Maria de' Medici set in motion a vast propaganda campaign to legitimize her reign and establish a clear path to future power. One aspect of this campaign was the continued construction and decoration of the Luxembourg Palace. An important element was to be the decoration of the two long ceremonial galleries by the most famous artist of the day, Peter Paul Rubens. Rubens significantly contributed to Maria's objectives by depicting the transfer of power from Henry IV to herself, and the continuation of policies between both reigns.

Discussions of Maria's patronage usually center on Rubens' cycle of twenty-four paintings glorifying the Queen's life. Although interpreted on its own in a myriad of ways for hundreds of years, this series constitutes but one half of the original commission. Rubens' contract with the Queen Mother states that he was to complete forty-eight canvases: twenty-four depicting the life of the Queen, and twenty-four depicting the life of King Henry IV. Together, the two cycles contribute to Maria's legacy by illustrating her mastery of art in the service of politics. Because the Henry series is incomplete, many authors overlook the second half of the commission and, consequently, interpret the Medici series in a manner unintended by the patron and detrimental to her cause. The studies by Jacques Thuillier, Geraldine Johnson and most recently Millen and Wolf argue that the cycle failed because it presented Maria simply as an ideal heroine, threatened the male viewer or acted as a private salve for the Queen Mother. Shaw Smith's interesting study brings the two cycles together by connecting one painting from each gallery using the concept of the *Consecratio*, whereas Deborah Marrow merely hints at this possibility.

All the paintings of the Henry cycle, when viewed as an essential component of the commission, reveal that the two cycles' main objective was to legitimize Maria's rule. This is achieved by harmonizing subject matter, iconography, and placement in space between the two galleries. This thesis demonstrates that the Henry cycle was intended to reinforce ideas found in the Queen's gallery, and that the Medici cycle can be best understood if read as a continuation of – or pendant to – the Henry series, and part of a larger propaganda campaign that included the whole Luxembourg Palace.

Since the unveiling of the Medici cycle in 1625, many texts either have provided an iconographic analysis of the highly detailed subjects or have argued the genesis behind the project. Instead of focusing on what has already been written on this series, this thesis focuses on the unfinished cycle of Henry IV. Investigation of this aspect of Maria's patronage demonstrates that it was an integral component of the already completed Medici cycle and further contributes to its understanding. A completed Henry cycle would have reinforced ideas found in the Medici cycle – principally, a continuation of policy between reigns of husband and wife, and Maria's legitimate right to assume the seat of power. Special attention is paid to the sets of triads at the ends of each gallery whose six subjects not only provide an aesthetic and narrative focus, but also physically and conceptually unite the two galleries.

2. Prologue

In 1600 Maria de' Medici, a Tuscan princess, married King Henry IV of France, for political reasons. The birth of their first child (Louis XIII) assured the succession of the Bourbon line to the French throne. This event also marked the moment when Maria became more involved in affairs of state. The royal couple was to produce four more children before Henry's assassination in 1610. The intervening years saw peaceful relations with France's historical enemies, the Spanish Habsburgs, and all other nations of Europe. Before his death, the King was preparing to lead his army into battle against occupying forces in the lands of the Duke of Cleves. As part of the preparation, he named his wife as regent for the underage heir, and also crowned her as queen. The day following the coronation ceremony, Henry was killed by a religious fanatic.

Upon the King's death, Maria assumed control of the Regency. She yielded the seat of power to her son, Louis XIII, when he came of age in 1614, but retained control of the government until 1617(upon her son's request). Relations between mother and son deteriorated during the last years of her regency, with Maria's favorite courtier, Concino Concini, taking control of the government. Meanwhile Louis XIII developed an attachment to the Duc de Luynes, who, in 1617, convinced the young king to execute Concini and exile his mother to the Château at Blois. Maria stayed in the Château for two years, escaping with the aid of nobles and princes. With the help of these opponents to royal power, Maria raised an army to face the King, her son. A peace was concluded at Angoulême with the aid of Richelieu, who would rise under the Queen's auspices. A few months later, the Queen and her son again took up arms and a second treaty was negotiated at Ponts-de-Cé, again with Richelieu's aid. The second treaty allowed Maria to re-enter Paris, where a full reconciliation between mother and son could be effected. On his death in December 1621, Luynes became a scapegoat for the estrangement between mother and son and peace was finally achieved.

At this time, Maria set in motion a vast propaganda campaign to assure her ascent to power and possible future Regency. This was possible in 1621 because her youngest son, Gaston d'Orleans, was a minor, and the young king was in ill health. Maria's

propaganda campaign included the continued construction of her Luxembourg palace (which had been left unfinished at the time of her exile) and its decoration with numerous artistic and sculptural commissions. After consultations with her advisors, principally Claude Maugis, the Cardinal Richelieu, and Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc, Maria called Rubens to Paris to discuss the decoration of the galleries with two cycles of twenty-four subjects; one illustrating the life of Maria de' Medici, the other of Henry IV. These two cycles were conceived as a single commission, contributing to the ideas that Maria ruled *in the name of* Henry IV and Louis XIII, and that she had acquired the orb of power legitimately.

Rubens completed the Medici series within three years. It was unveiled at the wedding festivities of Henrietta-Maria to King Charles I of England. In the following years, Maria had grown dependant on the advice of Richelieu who provided counsel to the King and occupied a prominent place in his heart. The Medici series defended Maria's actions during her regency and emphasized that she had always followed Henry's peaceful policies with their Spanish neighbors and with the other houses of Europe. (The strategic target of this communication were the principal players of contemporary European politics.) For political reasons, Richelieu wanted to popularize a peaceful image of French foreign policy. Though Richelieu's eventual aim was the overthrow of the Spanish Habsburgs and European dominance, he knew that France was too weak to achieve such goals at the moment. He therefore wanted to convince the powers of Europe that France had, and would continue to follow, a pacifist policy. Richelieu planned to continue this popularization until he felt France was strong enough to achieve his objectives.

After the wedding festivities, Rubens was anxious to start the Henry cycle. The second series of paintings would have related to the first cycle and lent credence to its message. It would have demonstrated that Henry IV's foreign policy aimed towards a European peace, which Maria continued. However, in 1625, Richelieu, whose political position was secure, was unwilling to publicly acknowledge a pacifist foreign policy because of his plans to change it to an offensive one. Instead of convincing Maria to cancel the second half of the commission, Richelieu simply created obstacles for the

artist, forcing him to slow production. Despite receiving only sporadic encouragement from Paris, Rubens began work on several of the large canvases and completed several *Bozzetti*.

For both personal and artistic reasons, Rubens wanted to finish the project. In his role as diplomat, Rubens knew that the completion of the Henry cycle could only help his cause. Unfortunately, Richelieu was also aware of this and, to impede completion of the Henry cycle, kept changing requirements, such as the size of the canvases. In frustration, Rubens stopped work in October of 1630. The project was not to occupy Rubens' studio again because Maria was exiled from France in November of 1630, never to return to the land that she had governed for seven years. The cancellation of the second half of Rubens' Luxembourg commission was fortuitous to Richelieu's objectives for France. However, had the cycle been completed, it would have provided irrefutable proof of the peaceful policy followed by Henry IV and the legitimacy of Maria's reign. The following pages recounts the story of the Henry cycle, and how it was to contribute to an understanding of Rubens' painted life of the Queen Mother.

3. Literary Review

The Medici series stands out as an important monument in the history of art. Its impact and complexity of meaning are supported by the considerable amount of scholarly literature that it has generated. Following its unveiling at the wedding festivities of Henrietta-Maria to King Charles I of England, in May 1625, it quickly generated interest. This occasion precipitated King Louis XIII's first visit to the newly constructed Luxembourg palace that had begun ten years earlier. In discussing this event in a letter to his French colleague, Rubens writes:

> *Mostrò ancora S. M.* [Louis XIII] *d'haver ogni sodisfattione delle nostre pitture, come mi e stato riferito di tutti che si trovarano presenti e particolarmente di Mr di S. Ambrosio che serivi d'interprete degli soggietti con una diversione e dissimulatione del vero senso molto artificiosa.*[1]

Rubens's mention of M. de S. Ambroise interpreting the subjects for the King, 'with a highly skilled deflection and dissimulation of the true meaning' has been the focal point of many arguments and studies on the cycle. Jeffrey Muller has noted that "by characterizing Maugis's interpretation as a 'dissimulation,' Rubens inadvertently handed twentieth-century historians an excuse to search for hidden meanings and intentional ambiguity."[2] Thus a multitude of interpretations abounds while the exact meaning of the cycle, and many of its constituent parts, remain in question. Recounting the first description of the Medici series permits an understanding of the difficulties facing modern scholars. Claude-Barthélemy Morisot was the first individual to write a narrative of the Medici series in his publication the *Porticus Medicea* (1626). When Rubens saw

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[1] M. Rooses and C. Ruelens, *Correspondance de Rubens et documents épistolaires concernant sa vie et ses oeuvres* Vol. III (Antwerp, 1887 – 1909) 353-354. Ruth Saunders Magurn translates this portion as "The King also did me the honor of coming to see our Gallery; this was the first time he had ever set foot in this palace, which they had begun to build sixteen or eighteen years ago...His Majesty showed complete satisfaction with our pictures, from the reports of all who were present, particularly M. de S. Ambroise. He served as interpreter of the subjects, *changing or concealing the true meaning with great skill...*" *The Letters of Peter Paul Rubens* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern, 1991) 109. Although Magurn translates "*diversione e dissimulatione del vero senso molto artificiosa*" as "changing or concealing the true meaning with great skill" it should be interpreted as "with a highly skilled deflection and dissimulation of the true meaning." Jeffrey M. Muller, "Heroic Deeds and Mystic Figures: A New Reading of Rubens' Life of Maria de' Medici [Book Review]," *Oud Holland* 107 No. 3 (1993): 308.

[2] Muller 308.

this eloquent verse he wrote that many of the identifications were inaccurate, and that the author "was not well informed in all the details of the subjects – details which are difficult to ascertain entirely by conjecture, without some explanation by the artist himself."[3] It is not surprising that other early commentators on the cycle such as Mathieu de Morgues, A. Félibien des Avaux, Moreau de Mautour and Jean-Marc Nattier faced problems familiar to Morisot.[4]

Modern scholars are advantaged by having access to primary resources on the cycle, including the writings of early commentators. A particularly valuable resource is a document found in the Fonds Baluze of the Bibliothèque Nationale, written in 1622, describing the subjects and actions of the first nineteen pictures.[5] With the aid of such documents, and detailed knowledge of seventeenth-century history and symbolism, such scholars as Thuillier and Foucart, Millen and Wolf, and Julius Held have identified all individual scenes. Although subjects and sources for each canvas have been catalogued, modern scholars still debate the genesis and function of the cycle.[6] Rubens' letter is often cited to justify the creation of differing explanations. A few of the interpretations proposed in this century include the cycle as: 1) an exponent for the divine right of rulership, 2) an exponent of the cult of the romantic heroine, 3) a response to the tapestries dedicated to the life of Constantine commissioned by Louis XIII, 4) an

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[3] In a letter to Pierre Dupuy dated January 20, 1628 Rubens writes: "N. Morisot...his verses are indeed admirable, and breathe a magnanimity rare in our century. My thought, in complaining, was never anything but annoyance that so great a poet, in doing me the honor of celebrating my works, was not well informed in all the details of the subjects – details which are difficult to ascertain entirely by conjecture, without some explanation by the artist himself. I cannot answer his letter now, but I shall be very glad to do so at the first opportunity, and will point out what he has omitted and what he has changed or distorted *in alium sensum*. But these passages are few, and I marvel that he has fathomed so much by vision alone. To be sure, I haven't the theme of those pictures in writing, and perhaps my memory will not serve me as accurately as I should like, but I will do all I can to satisfy him." Magurn 231.

[4] See Julius Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) 92 and Jacques Thuillier and Jacques Foucart, *Rubens' Life of Maria de' Medici* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1969) 3 – 5 for the full description of early interpreters and a brief overview of modern scholarship.

[5] See Jacques Thuillier. "La 'Galerie de Médicis' de Rubens et sa genèse: un document inédit," *Revue de l'Art* 4 (1969): 52-62.

[6] Although individual scenes are identified, agreement has not yet been reached on the identification of all allegorical figures.

expression of Richelieu's policies, and 5) a supreme *apologia* by the Queen Mother.[7] Although elements of each interpretation are valid, they rarely consider Maria's greater patronage and goals during her most active years when she returned from exile and was reinstated in the King's Council.

Several studies that greatly contribute to resolving problems of interpretation have appeared within the last two decades. The first, by Deborah Marrow, investigates the overall art patronage of Maria de' Medici. Marrow interprets the two-cycle commission as an important element within a larger propaganda campaign undertaken after Maria's return from exile in 1621. This campaign's objective was to present Maria as the 'Queen Triumphant' in order to help her regain the power she felt was rightfully hers.[8] Much of Marrow's argument rests on the idea that Maria had to show herself as triumphant in the legality of her position and in the continuity of her regency with the reign of Henry IV.[9]

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[7] One can ascertain the type of academic rhetoric that surrounds discussions on the Medici cycle if the diverging opinions of two authors are investigated. John Coolidge is apt to deem the cycles for the Luxembourg as counter-propaganda to the series of tapestries designed by Rubens illustrating the life of Constantine. Thuillier and Foucart remarked that "more debatable is Coolidge's interpretation of the *Life of Constantine* as an outspoken criticism of Marie's activities during her regency, as an allegory of the reign of Henri IV, symbolized by Constantine, utilized for a stern confutation of the Queen-Mother's policies." Thuillier and Foucart refute this analysis by simply looking at the chronology of events, observing that Rubens had not even begun the cartoons for the *Life of Constantine* when he received the commission for the Luxembourg. More recent scholarship suggests that the Constantine series was not even a royal commission but that the Flemish owners of a Parisian tapestry workshop, Marc de Comans and François de la Planche, offered it to the King as a gift. Although wrong in his reasoning on the genesis of the commission, Coolidge is right in his *raison d'être* for the cycles—it was a justification of Maria's policies. See John Coolidge, "Louis XIII and Rubens: The Story of the Constantine Tapestries," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 67 (1966): 271-292 and Thuillier and Foucart 98.

[8] Marrow writes: "Thus, although Maria's imagery was not developed in response to one specific political incident, it was developed in response to the broad political concerns of her particular rule. In addition to the problem of being a female ruler under the Salic law, she faced French fears of foreign influence, and particularly their fear of the Medici. Furthermore, the rule of Maria and the succession of her children were threatened by the claims of the princes of the blood and the children of Henriette d'Entragues. In confronting these problems, Maria needed an imagery that stressed the legality of her position, the continuity of her regency with the reign of Henri IV and her role as a peacekeeper. However, as Rubin confirms, it was extremely difficult to develop a visual language equal to this task for a female ruler." Deborah Marrow, *The Art Patronage of Maria de' Medici* (Ann Arbor, Mi: UMI Research Press, 1982) 65-66.

[9] The painting at the end of the Medici gallery, which hangs above the fireplace, depicts Maria in the guise of Minerva and is known as the *Queen Triumphant*. Marrow writes that "it is the image which perhaps best summarizes he Queen's iconography..." and that "The theme of the Queen triumphant and identified with the good of the state is prominent in other works which Maria commissioned in the 1620s. The decorations at the Luxembourg particularly underline the idea. The palace was filled with painted allegories of the Queen in power and of peace, abundance, and glory..." *The Art Patronage of Maria de' Medici* 68 – 70.

Marrow hints at the relation between the two galleries by stating that a leitmotif runs through all of Maria's commissions but does not expand on this idea. She correctly neither rejects previous scholarship nor adopts, in its entirety, a single interpretation. Rather, she views the Rubens cycles as yet other aspects of Maria's propaganda campaign that simultaneously addressed a multitude of issues and worked on a myriad of levels. In a discussion of the difficulties of interpreting the Rubens canvases Marrow writes:

> It seems that the difficulty lies in the use of a narrow definition of politics. By interpreting the Medici cycle as either political or apolitical, historians have argued for and against references to specific court figures or to contemporary events. If one accepts a broader definition of politics as including anything which enhances the power of the monarch, then it becomes possible to interpret the imagery of the Medici cycle as both political and more universal. It seems perfectly plausible that Maria de' Medici is meant to be seen as a heroine or an ideal monarch, and that these general images could also serve to strengthen her political power.[10]

If 'politics' is understood in this manner then it can be argued that divergent interpretations are simultaneously correct. The Medici cycle can be both a treatise on the idea of the romantic heroine *and* present the concept of a return to the golden age under Medici rule.[11] Both interpretations of the series would bolster Maria's prestige and lend credence to her cause.

It is not simply the tremendous number of figures, details, and scenes that allow scholars to 'prove' various interpretations of the cycles. During the conception and development of the project, numerous minds with different objectives were at work. Although ultimately a product of the Queen's patronage, her aides likely participated in discussions concerning the choice of artist, subjects and manner of execution.[12] When studying the series, it must be remembered that many individuals, of diverse political

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[10] Marrow, *The Art Patronage of Maria de' Medici* 55.

[11] See Jacques Thuillier "La galerie de Marie de Médicis: Peinture, poétique et politique," *Rubens e Firenze*, ed. Mina Gregori (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1983) 249 – 266 and Susan Saward *The Golden Age of Maria de Medici* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982).

[12] After the initial stages of the commission, members of Maria's entourage, notably Claude Maugis and Cardinal Richelieu, would oversee the execution of the project. If they felt that a particular subject would be detrimental to the Queen's cause they would see that it was eliminated or changed, depending on the degree of potential embarassment. For a further look on the mechanics of patronage see Marrow, *The Art Patronage of Maria de' Medici* 48 – 54.

motives and allegiances, contributed to the Medici cycle. They include the Queen Mother herself, the Cardinal Richelieu, Claude Maugis Abbé de Saint-Ambroise, Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc and the artist, Peter Paul Rubens. Although Maria invested an enormous amount of energy in the project, she had to delegate much of the responsibility. Therefore, Richelieu could have incorporated his own political agenda while Peiresc, with Rubens acting as a link between Paris and Antwerp, may have included scholarly antique passages. Furthermore, Rubens was a scholar of the antique and used as many symbolic devices and allegorical figures as he felt necessary. Being an individual of considerable erudition and knowledge in the areas of the antique and panegyric, he would have introduced his own set of symbolism and enhanced those that were given to him. From the cycle's inception, Rubens wished to use general subjects and ideas rather than specific political events in the Queen's life.[13] He felt that using allegorical and mythological figures, as well as antique and modern emblems, (particularly when painting highly charged political scenes) would avoid complications. Consequently, each picture is open to a multi-layered interpretation. Richelieu realized this ambiguity would be to his benefit – for this reason the list of reserved subjects ended with the general instruction that the artist was to represent "Il tutto con figure mistice et con ogni rispetto al figlio."[14] These figures would allow a margin for commentary that could differ from the intended meaning.

While Deborah Marrow's study places the series within the greater context of Maria de' Medici's overall patronage, individual canvases require considerable attention in their own right. In 1989, Ronald Forsyth Millen and Erich Wolf published a useful guide to individual subjects. *Heroic Deeds and Mystic figures: A new reading of Rubens' life of Maria de' Medici* is an astoundingly comprehensive and in-depth view of the Medici cycle. The authors correctly understand the genesis of the cycle to be political: to

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[13] In a letter to Peiresc dated May 13, 1625 Rubens writes "This subject [the *Felicity of the Regency*], which does not touch upon the *raison d'état* of this reign, or apply to any individual, has evoked much pleasure, and I believe that if the other subjects had been entrusted entirely to us, they would have passed, as far as the Court is concerned, without any scandal or murmur. [*In margin*: The Cardinal perceived this too late, and was very much annoyed to see that the new subjects were taken amiss.]" Magurn 109.

[14] "Everything with mystic figures and with all respect towards the son." Ruelens and Rooses III 24 (note 14).

present an alternative policy geared towards peace with Spain. Jeffrey Muller has observed that although correct in this assumption Millen and Wolf are mistaken in characterizing the origin of the series as a private salve for Maria's "wounded vanity and vindictive anger."[15] The authors also fail to consider the Queen Mother's larger patronage, of which the Medici cycle was but one further segment.[16] In this respect they also neither seriously consider the unfinished cycle of Henry IV, nor do they properly understand its intended function with respect to the Queen's cycle.[17] Although Millen and Wolf misunderstood certain aspects of the Medici cycle, they make two important contributions. First, through examination of each picture with respect to emblems available at the time they provided a detailed analysis of all iconography and symbols. This has facilitated subsequent deciphering of the layers of meaning of each picture. Their second contribution is the uncovering and publishing of documentary accounts of the events depicted. Muller notes that

> the result of this procedure, applied rigorously to each painting, is a cumulative force of contrast between what can be reconstructed of the actual events and what is represented in the pictures. Reiterating the distinction between historical event and poetic fiction in their account of each picture, the authors dispense with the obtuse tradition that would discuss these works according to a standard of what actually happened. Instead, they open up and mine the possibility of explaining the motives

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[15] "They mistake the fundamental character of the series as a private salve for the Queen Mother's wounded vanity and vindictive anger. This misinterprets both Maria de' Medici's position at the French court in 1622-1625 and the function of such a major work of art which could never be private, but rather, displayed in the reception gallery of a royal palace, in the context of court society, carried an obviously public and representative meaning... Her perspective when she commissioned the series, say Millen and Wolf, was not that of the Queen of France, but instead of the outraged Maria de' Medici who 'could now only counsel and never again rule.' This ignores the profound implications of what Rubens himself reported to the Infanta Isabella in a letter of March 15, 1625, sent from Paris where he had gone to install the Medici series: 'One must realize that the entire government of this kingdom lies at present in the hands of the Queen Mother and Cardinal Richelieu.' Muller 306.

[16] Geraldine Johnson states that the Luxembourg Palace was "a complex that effectively served as a blank canvas on which she could express her ambitions and concerns." "Imagining Images of Powerful Women: Maria de' Medici's Patronage of Art and Architecture," *Women and Art in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Cynthia Lawrence (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997) 138.

[17] Millen and Wolf write that "had the Galerie Henri IV been carried through with its grand displays of battles and triumphs, it would have made a much more spectacular impression than the Queen's own gallery, and the more so in the eyes of the time. Her own biographical pictures would then have looked more overtly what in fact they are, a lyrical rather than epical threnody for a husband too early lost and a complaint against the unhappiness that then became his widow's lot. By the mere fact of seeming more modest, more "feminine," their provocation would have been made more obvious." Millen and Wolf 13.

> behind each fictional revision and, finally, of understanding the purpose of the whole series.[18]

Although helping the reader to understand the genesis of individual scenes, Millen and Wolf's study does not clarify the origins of the project.[19]

The trend in scholarship of the Medici cycle is to concentrate *either* on an iconographic analysis (Millen and Wolf), *or* the cycle's place within Maria's larger patronage (Marrow). It is only recently that these two streams have been united. Shaw Smith began this unification with his article "Rubens and the *Grand Camée de France*: The *Consecratio* in the Medici Galleries of the Luxembourg Palace."[20] Smith uses the theme of the *consecratio* to connect the Medici cycle with the incomplete cycle of Henry IV intended for the parallel gallery. The *consecratio* motif links both projects and reinforces the idea of legitimacy that is at the core of Maria's propaganda campaign. Thus, a specific iconography unites the two cycles within the Queen's greater patronage in order to emphasize an ongoing concern. By understanding how the Medici series was to function, both conceptually and physically, with the rest of the decorations of the Luxembourg palace, it becomes apparent that a fresh look at the unfinished cycle of Henry IV is required.

Smith's study is helpful in reminding Rubens scholars that the Medici cycle is merely one half of an original commission and that it can only be fully appreciated when the two "lives" are united. Criticism about the effectiveness of the Medici gallery can be partially attributed to ignoring this fact. Some critics claim that the series failed because it threatens the male viewer, others argue that it illustrates a peace policy unintended by the King (in whose behalf Maria was ruling) and that it presents an image of the Queen

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[18] Muller 306.

[19] Perhaps the best example of this is Millen and Wolf's discussion of the canvas depicting *The Coronation in Saint-Denis*. In a close analysis of the sketch, emblems, iconography, individuals, and poses in the final painting, the reader understands that every detail of each canvas is painted in a manner to bolster Maria's prestige. Millen and Wolf 107 – 120.

[20] Shaw Smith, "Rubens and the *Grand Camée de France*: The *Consecratio* in the Medici Galleries of the Luxembourg Palace," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 120 (1992): 127-136.

Mother incongruent with that of a female ruler.[21] The Henry cycle, had it been completed, would have provided a basis for comparison. It would have negated any threat to the male viewer and reinforced the idea that Maria triumphed *within* the limitations imposed upon her gender by seventeenth-century society. It would have illustrated a clear continuation of policies between reigns provided a basis for understanding the often heroic imagery in the Queen's gallery. This paper does not examine how the Medici cycle has been misinterpreted by neglecting the King's cycle; instead, it concentrates on how the Henry series was to contribute to the *concetto* for Maria's patronage.

That the Henry cycle must be considered when discussing the Medici cycle is supported by the original commission which states that Rubens was to complete *forty-eight paintings* for the Queen Mother, with twenty-four dedicated to the life of the Queen and twenty-four to the life of the King. To reinforce the notion that both cycles were conceived as a unit, the contract states that upon completion of the first twelve subjects for the Queen's gallery, the first twelve subjects for the King's gallery must be submitted for approval in the form of oil sketches. The contract does not treat the two series as individual commissions but as a single decorative scheme. No scholar has yet taken an in-depth look at *all the panels of the Henry cycle* in relation to the Medici series. Julius Held provides a discussion of the oil sketches without taking into consideration the Queen's gallery.[22] Ingrid Jost has provided an iconographic reading of known subjects but does not take the discussion beyond this point. This paper investigates the Henry cycle and attempts to place it within its proper context.

Upon her return to Paris in 1621, Maria required a vast propaganda campaign. This was needed to popularize her interpretation of recent historical events, to illustrate that she always kept within the boundaries of her regency, and to revamp her image as a powerful female with the goal of regaining lost power. By solidifying her power base and by defending the actions of her rule, she hoped to be able to claim the Regency on behalf

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[21] See Geraldine Johnson, "Pictures Fit For a Queen: Peter Paul Rubens and the Marie de' Medici Cycle," *Art History* 16 No. 3 (1993): 447-469 and Otto Georg von Simson, "Richelieu and Rubens: Reflections on the Art of Politics," *Review of Politics* 6 (1944): 422-451.
[22] Julius Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens*, 123 – 136.

of her youngest son (Gaston d'Orleans) in case the sickly King should die. Had the King's cycle been completed, it would have offered irrefutable proof that Maria ruled in the name of Henry IV and not for her own aggrandizement.

4. The Life of Maria de' Medici and the French Political Scene After the Queen Mother's Return From Exile

Born April 26, 1573, daughter of the Grand-Duke of Tuscany, Maria was raised within the Medici circles in Florence. Her father, Francesco I, became Grand-Duke upon his brother's death in 1575. Her mother, Johanna of Austria, died in 1578, and soon thereafter her father married his mistress, Bianca Cappello. In 1584, Maria was sent to live in the Pitti Palace, the structure on which she would later model the Luxembourg. Between October 19 and 20, 1587, both Francesco I and Bianca Cappello died from poison administered by Francesco's brother, the Cardinal Ferdinando, who consequently became Grand-Duke of Tuscany. After giving up his career in the church to take on political responsibilities, he married Christine of Lorraine, a daughter of Caterina de' Medici, who was the same age as Maria. At this time Maria was introduced to Dianora Dori, known as Leonora Galigai, who was to become a life-long friend until her execution at the French court in 1617.[23]

Grand Duke Ferdinando I showed great affection and dedication towards his niece. As the new Grand Duke, he wished to arrange a politically important marriage for Maria, and negotiated for thirteen years before finally conceding her to King Henry IV of France in 1600. The marriage was motivated by the current politics of the Medici. Its historical precedent was the marriage of Maria's cousin, Caterina de' Medici, to Henry of Orleans, the future King Henry II of France, in 1533. It was hoped that Maria's marriage, like her cousin's, would not only cause a rapprochement in Franco-Florentine relations, but also offset the powerful Habsburg family and help establish a balance of power in Europe.[24] Caterina's marriage to the future King of France had a tremendous impact on the life of Maria de' Medici. As Caterina had become Queen-Regent of France, so did Maria. Maria perceived her predecessor as an example to emulate not only in her capacity as a patron of the arts, but also in the power that she yielded and the tenacity with which

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[23] Consult Millen and Wolf for a study on the relationship between Maria and Leonora Galigai, 39-40.
[24] The complicated Franco-Florentine relations are described in detail by Marc Smith, "Princess de Toscane," *Marie de Médicis et le Palais du Luxembourg* ed. Marie-Noëlle Baudouin-Matuszek et al (Paris: Délégation à l'Action Artistique de la Ville de Paris, 1991) 42-49.

she defended it. A second important impact on Maria's life was a concern over the threat of foreign domination that had developed during Caterina's reign in France.

Henry IV divorced his first wife, Marguerite de Valois, first because she had not produced an heir to the throne and, second, because the King's coffers were in need of new funds. Maria brought a large dowry to the marriage and produced six children – three sons and three daughters – thus assuring the continuity of the French monarchy, and averting another civil war.[25] With the birth of the dauphin, Louis XIII, Maria became more involved in affairs of state. It was around this time that Henry IV began to appreciate and even love his Italian wife, and to recognize her great political acumen. He demonstrated this newfound respect for Maria by giving her a seat in the Council of State in 1603.[26] On March 20, 1610, while Henry IV was making preparations to lead his armies into battle, he named his wife Regent of France. To emphasize the legality of her potential Regency, Maria was officially crowned Queen of France, becoming the first woman to hold that title in forty years. The coronation ceremony took place at Saint-Denis on May 13, 1610 with all the pomp and splendor expected of a divinely sanctioned coronation. The day after the ceremony, while the King was inspecting preparations for Maria's Joyous Entry, a religious fanatic named Ravaillac killed him.[27]

Maria immediately assumed the Regency and ruled in her son's stead until 1617 – even after he had attained his majority on October 2, 1614. Although the age of majority was thirteen, Louis was not yet interested in taking on the responsibility of government.

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[25] One son, the duke of Orleans, died at the end of 1611 at the age of four. Next in line was the duke of Anjou, who had been born in 1608 and would only reach his majority in 1621. Because Maria gave birth to six children in the panel of *The Birth of the Dauphin at Fontainebleau*, in the Medici series, there are five heads in the cornucopia of flowers beside her throne in addition to the baby who is being handed by the figure of Justice to the genius of Good Health at the right.

[26] "The King's Council assumed responsibility for the policy and administration of the realm. The Council was thus concerned with a wide variety of different questions: general policy, relations with foreign countries, royal finances. These involved the administration of Crown lands, the allocation of direct and indirect taxes, military and religious matters, the government of the provinces and their administration by the king's agents, the execution of justice and conflicts between different jurisdictions, commerce, traffic on waterways and high seas—in short, everything. As the territory ruled over by the French monarchy had expanded and its interests had become more numerous and complicated the Council's role had become progressively more and more onerous." Victor L. Tapié, *France in the Age of Louis XIII and Richelieu* tr. and ed D. McN. Lockie (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd, 1974) 51.

In fact, the young king was quite pleased to live a carefree life, and therefore allowed his mother to continue in her present capacity. Matteo Bartolini, in a letter to the Tuscan Grand Duke, reporting on the ceremony that was held to commemorate Louis' majority, relates that the King "intended that the Queen his mother should assist him with her good counsel as she had done up to that day, declaring her Chief of his Council and adding that in any case he would always give heed to what his chancellor would say."[28]

The first five years of Maria de' Medici's regency were relatively peaceful. The problems that did arise related to the unexpected assassination of Henry IV, and the state of the country that she had inherited. In addition to the natural opposition of the Regency by the princes of the blood (who were next in line for the throne after the Dauphin), Maria had to overcome her status as a "foreigner" and as a woman.[29] Due to their inability to access the power they felt to be rightly theirs, the princes attacked the Regency and tried to overpower Maria by using military tactics. They challenged her rule by pointing out the Regent's foreign birth and the questionable legitimacy (in their eyes) of her marriage to Henry IV. They disputed the validity of this union because Henry's first marriage to Marguerite de Valois had been annulled (with her consent), an uncommon practice at the time.[30] Upon assuming the Regency, Maria made the confirmation of the Edict of Nantes one of her first acts. Another pressing matter was that of the military campaign, for which Henry IV had been preparing when he crowned his wife, first as regent, then as queen. The Queen-Regent chose to carry out the first part of

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[27] Some argue that the Queen was involved, others that it was self-motivated, and still others that it was largely due to the instigation of the Spanish.

[28] Millen and Wolf 169.

[29] The two main princes of the blood were the comte de Soissons and the prince of Condé (first cousins of Henry IV) who were away from Paris at the time of the assassination and proclamation of the regency by the Parlement.

[30] Maria's marriage *did* have full validity in the eyes of the church despite attacks by her enemies, and she would make full use of this fact in her propaganda campaign. *The Coronation in Saint-Denis*, one of the extra long canvases in the Medici cycle, celebrates her coronation and demonstrates both clerical and secular approval of it. Marguerite de Valois had a prominent place in the entourage to demonstrate and remind the viewer that she took an active part in the coronation and, therefore, approved of it. Similarly, the cardinal (Joyeuse), who is shown placing the crown on Maria's head, is the same cardinal who "had been a member of the commission that recommended the dissolution of Henri's marriage to marguerite de Valois, and so was evidence in his own person of the legality of the subsequent marriage to the Medici princess." Millen and Wolf 112. Another way in which she stressed the legality of her marriage in the Medici cycle is seen in the *Marriage by Proxy* where the officiating cardinal, Pietro Aldobrandini, nephew of Pope Clement

her husband's military plans, the conquest of Jülich, but decided not to advance on Italy. Although completing only part of the intended military campaign, Maria managed to honor the wishes of her husband and ensure the future of the kingdom for her son. Victor L. Tapié notes that

> the queen's policy... was not simply evasive; it represented more than a volte-face, and there was no lack of arguments in its favour. How could France possibly run the risk of war during a regency? A royal minority was an interim period, when the wisest course was to protect the king's freedom of action in the future by endeavoring to ensure that his realm remained obedient and peaceful. A war would have offered Spain a pretext for stirring up trouble in France. That would have been a fine start!

Maria was well aware of Henry IV's foreign and domestic policies and the state of the King's forces at the time of his death. She knew that Henry IV had worked for a general European peace during the years 1598 – 1610 and that France's armies would be unable at this time to confront their Spanish counterparts in a full-scale war. The new regent appreciated the fact that Henry IV's goal had been peaceful relations with Spain in hopes of a marriage alliance between the Dauphin and the Spanish infanta. Maria upheld and extended this idea to include a second marriage between Louis XIII's eldest sister, 'Madame Elisabeth', and the future King Philip IV. Both marriages took place in 1615, after several delays linked with internal problems.[31] Maria felt this double royal marriage to be her finest diplomatic coup, and, understandingly, would choose to popularize this event in her propaganda and incorporate it into her imagery several years later. Maria brought Henry's policies to fruition not only to illustrate that her regency was an extension of Henry IV's reign, but also for the reason that she truly believed in the principle of peace. The idea of Maria as peacekeeper is another image that she would later use to justify her regency following her return from exile.

VIII, was given a place of prominence. Therefore, anyone attacking the validity of her marriage would also be attacking the authority of the papacy. Millen and Wolf 206.

[31] In 1613, the prince of Condé (next in line for the throne after the duke of Anjou) raised an army as a rallying point for royal opposition and malcontent nobles. The Queen's advisors pushed her to negotiate instead of engaging in warfare. The outcome of the negotiations forced Maria to 1) pay the rebels a considerable sum of money, 2) disband her own troops, 3) agree to a delay of the double marriage even though the contracts had been signed nearly two years previously, and 4) promise to summon the Estates-General to meet, within three months, to initiate a large-scale consultation of the realm, effectively opening up her regency to close inspection. Tapié 72.

Concurrent with the death of Henry IV, a couple, of Italian origin, in France ascended rapidly in wealth and power, and acted as catalyst in the breakdown of relations between Maria de' Medici and Louis XIII. The wife, Leonora Galigai, was one of Maria's oldest friends and a foster sister. The husband, Concino Concini, was a man of noble birth and saw great advantage in marrying a close friend of the Queen Mother's. The Concinis owed their meteoric rise to the multitude of pensions and offices that the Queen lavished upon the nobility and her entourage.[32] The Italian couple rose to a dizzying height within the space of a couple of months and purchased the marquisate of Ancre. Concini also obtained the governorship of Péronne, Royne and Montdidier, and acquired the lieutenant-generalship of Picardy in addition to the post of first gentleman of the bedchamber.

Although the methods and procedures of administering the realm remained the same under Maria de' Medici as they had under Henry IV, their effectiveness deteriorated. During the Regency, officials looked after their own interests and deprived the treasury of much income, whereas during Henry IV's reign, they had catered to the King's interest. Another problem was the sum of money that had to be paid out in pensions to holders of various offices. The amount had doubled during the first year of the Regency. Consequently, the government put a stop to the creation of new offices and abolished a certain number of offices created earlier. At the same time, the great nobles, led by the prince de Condé, joined forces to oppose the government. Instead of raising a powerful army to compel the princes to return to obedience, the ineffectual Concini and the other ministers advised the Queen to come to terms. The Queen Mother negotiated with the rebels, promising them considerable sums of money. She also consented to disband her own troops, delay the Spanish marriages, and summon the Estates-General to "initiate a large-scale consultation of the realm."[33] The Estates-General did not support the princes' party, due to failed political maneuverings, and in-fighting amongst the

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[32] Tapié 70.

[33] Tapié 72. Tapié explains the Estates-General to be "assemblies of considerable importance which were attended by deputies representing the three orders or estates of the realm. They were summoned by the king when he chose, generally on serious occasions, in order to acquaint him with the grievances of all his subjects and to settle with him the broad outlines of future policy." Tapié 51.

nobles led to much division and common opposition. This resulted in uniting the clergy and the third estate. In explaining this situation V. L. Tapié writes:

> The princes had expected the Estates-General to erupt in an outburst of nationalism against the rule of a foreign queen and her Italian favourite [Concini], with the deputies demanding that they should be readmitted to participation in the conduct of affairs as the representatives of the old political traditions. It was far too simple an answer. The Third Estate suspected that it represented an attempt to revert to a feudal form of government.... The clergy and the Commons preferred the monarchy (which they thought they would be able to influence) to the nobility, and ended by testifying to their complete confidence in the government. At the closing session on 23 February [1615] the spokesman for the clergy, Armand-Jean de Richelieu... praised the queen mother highly, expressed approval of the marriages concluded with the Spanish royal house and called for the restoration of the Catholic religion in Béarn.[34]

Instead of jeopardizing royal authority, the Estates-General served to strengthen it. With the support of the assembly on her side, Maria's primary mistake was the decision not to dissolve her association with the maréchal d'Ancre (Concini) and Leonora Galigai. After losing the support of the other two estates, prince Condé's only recourse to royal opposition lay in civil war. Although unable to unify all the princes, his antagonism did present a considerable threat. A treaty was negotiated at Loudon (May 3, 1616) in which Condé agreed to disband his troops only if he was admitted to the King's Council. Nicolas de Neufville, seigneur de Villeroy (a member of the King's Council who had served faithfully under Henry IV) urged the Queen to accept, thinking that Condé would be less dangerous inside the Council than outside. This might have been the case had Henry IV been there to subdue Condé, or had the other ministers kept him in check by their own solidarity. Unfortunately, Henry IV had long since been assassinated, and the current ministers wanted only to eliminate each other. The Council grew increasingly under Concini's command as his profile continued to grow. The ministers who had served under Henry IV were gradually forced out, either by their fellow ministers or by Concini. First to go was the chancellor Brûlart de Sillery, then Brûlart de Puysieulx (secretary of state for foreign affairs). Condé, arriving in Paris during the summer of 1616 was greeted

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[34] Tapié 74 – 75

with popular enthusiasm, since Concini and his ministry were disliked. In early September, on the advice of Sully (another of Henry IV's old ministers) and Bassompierre, Maria had the prince of Condé, who was a rallying point for rebels, arrested. Maria, entangled in her own web of intrigue, was suspicious of all the old ministers although it would be her favorite (Richelieu) who would ultimately cause her downfall. Her paranoia led to the dismissal of chancellor Villeroy, President Jeannin, and du Vair, the keeper of the seals. With the majority of old ministers gone, Concini appointed only individuals indebted to him. He installed Mangot as keeper of the seals, Barbin as the person responsible for finances, and Armand-Jean de Richelieu the Bishop of Luçon for foreign affairs and war. Such was the state of the Council and Regency when it ended in April 1617.[35]

While Maria was trying to maintain royal influence and protect her favourite, the young king developed an attachment to Charles d'Albert de Luynes (b. 1578), one of three brothers from the minor country nobility who came to make their fortune at court. The young king took a liking to the older man who, as V. L. Tapié explains,

> had helped to make Louis XIII's daily life less empty and monotonous by training hawks for the chase and by accompanying him on such expeditions, which constituted the young king's favourite occupation. His devoutness encouraged Louis XIII to trust him. Moreover Luynes was a good conversationalist, and contrived to say things which allayed his master's misgiving and flattered his pride.[36]

Luynes and the young king became almost inseparable and the courtier was able to stack the royal entourage with individuals of little consequence and of few redeeming qualities. For this reason, Luynes stood out among the King's entourage, forcing the young protégé's dependence and favoritism. While Concini was incompetently running the government, Luynes was gaining more and more power. Consequently, those ministers who distanced themselves from Concini began to find favor with Luynes. Luynes managed to control the young king even more by playing with his emotions. For example, when Louis was ill, Luynes would sit with him and convince him that he was being

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[35] Tapié 75 – 77
[36] Tapié 93 – 94

ousted and replaced by his brother Gaston — his mother's favorite. Millen and Wolf have noted that "Luynes also encouraged Louis's suspicion of Concini, and the latter's often crude behavior was all that was needed to convince the boy that the Florentine was more than a counselor to his mother."[37]

The beginning of the year 1617 saw incessant political machinations and excess in all areas of government. Richelieu, as minister of war, who was feared and disliked, attempted to distance himself from Concini and enter the good graces of Luynes. Maria de' Medici, becoming more and more nervous, could barely hold on to the reigns of government and thus began to approve public executions *en masse*, evoking the memory of her Medici predecessor, Caterina de' Medici. Concini, at the head of the council, acted purely in his own interests and provoked disdain and contempt from the King, the court, and the people of France. Concini, aware that he could possibly curb some of these sentiments – either by assassinating Luynes or by returning to Florence – did neither. This resulted in a final and fateful confrontation between Luynes and Concini – with the King and Maria as their pawns.

Circumstances reached a bloody conclusion on April 24, 1617. Upon Luynes' instigation, the King gave the order for Concini's arrest. Concini was then brutally assassinated in the courtyard of the Louvre — his body torn apart by a Parisian mob. Louis ordered that his mother be barred access to the outside and to her other children by being locked in her rooms, and Leonora Galigai be imprisoned. The Queen Mother stayed in her rooms until May 3, 1617, when she was ordered to leave Paris and take up residence in the Château at Blois, where she could be closely guarded by the King's forces. All those who had risen to prominence under Maria were expelled from Paris, including Richelieu, who would be instrumental in the Queen Mother's return to grace. Leonora was quickly tried for a number of charges ranging from usury to sorcery, and soon after beheaded.

With Maria and Concini out of the picture, Louis needed someone to govern his realm. Luynes was granted this enormous task since he was the only person that Louis

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[37] Millen and Wolf 175

believed he could trust. Unfortunately, Luynes was not qualified to direct the affairs of government, and the problems that existed during the last days of the Medici Regency continued under Louis XIII. Luynes simply stepped into the shoes vacated by Concini, making the same mistakes with worse results. The fact that Luynes received every token of royal favor, and was the beneficiary of a number of high offices – even acquiring some that were stripped from the two Concinis[38] not only incited the scorn of the nobles, but of the public as well. Luynes also made many enemies among the nobles and princes who had found favor under Concini, as well as those who were threatened with poverty by the elimination of offices.

Maria stayed in the Château at Blois for almost two years. She escaped on the night of February 21-22, 1619, aided by several discontented nobles, chief among them the Duc d'Épernon. An alliance with the Duc established the pair as a legitimate power since, together, they had a large army and strongholds at their disposal – a civil war could be precipitated, and they had to be taken seriously. Called into service because of Luynes' ineptitude, Richelieu achieved a treaty between mother and son that was acceptable to both parties. The treaty, signed at Angoulême on April 30, 1619, gave Maria and her party certain rights: Maria was awarded the governorship of Anjou, and was promised large sums of money, and Épernon was restored to favor. The actual meeting of mother and son did not occur until September of 1619, five months after the treaty was signed. Unfortunately, this would not be the last of the 'wars' between mother and son. Hostilities resumed eleven months later.

After this first peace between mother and son, their mutual mistrust continued. Luynes tried everything in his power to block Maria's return to court, but his extreme incompetence in running the affairs of government sent many nobles to the Queen Mother's camp. The situation worsened and by July 1620, civil war seemed inevitable. On August 7, at Ponts-de-Cé, the two armies had a final confrontation. The King's army had the advantage in both numbers and leadership, and the battle ended within three hours. Subsequently, mother and son again concluded a peace treaty on August 10, 1620.

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[38] Tapié 96.

Since Louis already had an army raised, it was felt that it would be an opportune moment to reestablish Catholicism in Béarn by waging war against the Huguenots. Credit for the reestablishment of good relations was given to Richelieu, thereby raising his profile and assuring him a Cardinal's hat in the future. Seemingly working towards an *entente* between mother and son, he was in fact attempting to increase his own profile. This was achieved by convincing each party that they were in need of his services, thereby bringing the situation to a final confrontation. He would then come to the rescue of both parties, saving potential embarrassment.

At this point, mother and son drew closer and the possibility of a true reconciliation seemed to emerged. For the first few months after the treaty, Maria kept her son company on military exploits until she was finally allowed to return to Paris at the beginning of November 1620. Holding the second highest rank in the country, she received an unofficial Triumphal Entry upon her return to the city. Maria continued to follow her son around France through 1621, finally convincing the King of her sincerity. She succeeded in reestablishing her son's trust, and was given the right to retire, temporarily, to Angers. Despite the ineffectiveness of the government, Luynes continued his rise in power and the title of connétable de France was conferred upon him on April 2, 1621. Indignation that the highest office in the realm had gone to a 'lowly bird catcher' was rampant.

On December 15, 1621, the last obstacle to a full reconciliation between mother and son was removed: Luynes fell victim to the purple fever. With his death, Luynes became the scapegoat for all of the country's problems. Maria was thus readmitted to the Council (February 4, 1622), and Richelieu gained a Cardinal's hat. During these years, Maria de' Medici became increasingly influenced by Richelieu to the extent that when she regained her seat (and the King's trust) Richelieu was able to make his opinions heard through her.

Maria still had dreams of future power. As Millen and Wolf have remarked:

> Sure of herself even in defeat, she was even prepared to ask the Estates to rule that, should something happen to the King, she would not be barred from a second regency, this time for Gaston Duc d'Anjou, her younger

> son... The assembly was never held, but the Parlement did declare her regency to be without fault or guilt. She was prepared to pay a price, but to give no more to the opposition than in desperation she might have to. With her characteristic foresight, she wished to make sure that her security would not be jeopardized whatever changes might lie ahead. To ensure her eventual aims she had to play her cards well. She had to feign surrender and resignation, to create a public image of herself as being beyond reproach. It cannot be stressed too strongly that this was a conscious dissimulation undertaken with the cunning of Richelieu to guide her...[39]

In order for Maria to achieve these aims, she had to create a public image of herself as being beyond reproach. Such was the state of affairs when Maria de' Medici called Rubens to Paris to negotiate the decoration of the Luxembourg palace with two cycles of 24 paintings; one dedicated to her life, and the other to the life of Henry IV.

Maria was readmitted to Council in February 1622, expounding a policy based on peace with Spain and a call for dominance over the Huguenots (with Richelieu's counsel). After two years of quiet submission to her son (time spent regaining his favor and trust) she managed, in 1624, to acquire a seat on the Council for Richelieu. Admitted in May, Richelieu soon forced out the current first minister, La Vieuville, and attained his post on the 24th of August. Maria worked for Richelieu's admittance to the Council on the belief that he would be her spokesman, and that she would be able to control him and thereby gain a more powerful voice (so proving Maria's seeming unwillingness to learn from experience). To the detriment of Maria's plans, Richelieu had his own agenda for himself and the future aggrandizement of France. C. V. Wedgwood notes that "Richelieu was to use the third part of his life still left to him to restore the threatened monarchy, to reintegrate the disordered nation, and to establish the solid foundation of French leadership in Europe, whether in the arts of peace or by the power of war."[40]

Maria de' Medici wanted the King to follow a policy that she thought would assure the long-term prosperity of France. She believed that prosperity to be contingent

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[39] Millen and Wolf 202. Although Millen and Wolf state that Richelieu guided Maria in her dissimulation, it must be remembered that Maria grew up as a Medici and received a full education of her heritage, including the propaganda that her ancestors used to create a positive image of themselves. Deborah Marrow demonstrates, in looking at Maria's patronage of the visual arts, that she did not have to rely solely on Richelieu, but was very aware and involved in the creation of her public image. Marrow, *The Art Patronage of Maria de' Medici* 1 – 54.

on a foreign policy based on a peaceful relationship with the Spanish, other countries of Europe, and the Huguenots within the realm. This was Maria's motivation when she married her eldest daughter to the future King of Spain (1615) and another daughter (Henrietta-Maria) to the King of England (1625). More importantly, this was the policy originally established by her husband, Henry IV. Richelieu wished to follow a similar course of action but had different long-term goals. The Cardinal knew that if war were to erupt between France and their traditional arch-rivals, the Habsburgs, the French nation would be severely threatened. For this reason he felt that his first act should be to unite the country under the leadership of a strong monarchy headed by Louis XIII, with the future goal of French dominance within Europe. These objectives could only be achieved with the submission of the Huguenots, the creation of national identity, and a period of prosperity within a peaceful realm. To this end he supported a peaceful resolution of the historical military conflict with Spain until a time that France was ready to take an offensive position. In short, Maria de' Medici and Cardinal Richelieu, the two individuals with the greatest influence over the young king, shared similar short-term goals with different long-term interests.

[40] Wedgwood, *Richelieu and the French Monarchy* 30.

5. Maria de' Medici's Heritage and Propaganda in the Visual Arts

Upon her re-entry to the King's Council after the death of the Connétable of France, Charles d'Albert de Luynes, Maria was in a good position to initiate the steps necessary to achieve her political ambitions. These included a return to supreme power and possible Regency.[41] Before this became plausible, the need to convince the nobles and princes of France that her rule as Regent had been free from error, was only one of the obstacles. To convince them she wished to illustrate that her policies were merely an extension of Henry IV's, and her primary objective was simply to safeguard the realm until Louis XIII was old enough to assume the royal seat of power. To counter allegations that she had assumed power illegally, she wished to popularize the notion that her rule had been granted directly from Henry IV, with the support of the Dauphin. Additionally, Maria had to overcome objections of rule by a female sovereign due to the tradition of the Salic law.[42] Maria set in motion a massive propaganda campaign that included not only

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[41] This was still a possibility in 1621 because not only were Louis XIII and Gaston d'Orleans childless, but the young King was known to be weak and frail.

[42] Although the Salic law is often cited in discussions of Maria de' Medici "illegally" assuming the Regency in 1610, Elain Rubin has shown this to be a fabrication. Rubin argues that this was not the understanding of the law in the seventeenth century. Rubin writes that "The Salic law, dating from the fifth century, was a procedural and criminal code, considered one of the fundamental laws of the French monarchy. The sixth article excluded women from the inheritance of the terre salique (what was considered the land of the Salian Franks, the ancestors of the French) and eventually was interpreted to mean that *the French crown had to be handed down through the male line in order of progeniture consequently bypassing all relatives on the female line*." (25) Also discussed is that "during the fourteenth century the law had become firmly entrenched in the popular mind as a juridical basis of dynastic right. In 1316, 1322, and 1328 it was used to reject the English claims to the French throne through female inheritance" (29) and that "a paramount factor conditioning the view of women was the attempt to extend the meaning of the Salic law to include regency governments. Regencies were declared during the minority, absence, imprisonment or indisposition of kings. Regencies had been held by princes of the blood, and queen mothers. Furthermore, regencies were named by the Estate General, testaments or letters of the king, the grandees, or parlement. Entangled in a web of contradiction was the age at which a king's majority was declared, the obligation of a regent to obtain counsel, and the extent of a regent's authority. Like the Salic law itself, declaration of regencies, the choice of regents and the definition of their functions were legal variables never fully determined. French history furnished enough contradictory precedents relative to regencies that *any individual or group seeking to appropriate political authority could avail themselves of the 'law.*'" (38) and that "Queen mothers had been named as regents twenty-three times, princes of the blood seventeen times and seigneurs who were not princes of the blood seven times." (38) Rubin further explains that "at the heart of the political problem was the pervasiveness of positive heroic qualities in literature juxtaposed with the existence of the Salic law, a procedural and criminal code from which the French derived their justification for the exclusion of women from the throne. Developed over several centuries the law evolved completely ignoring the fact that heroic qualities were attributable to female figures, claiming them only as male. In the Salic law, only men were given the right to bear arms, yet in literature the amazon (warlike women who reared only the females) figure was prevalent; only a man could defend the realm from intrusion, yet in heroic literature, women

commissioning works of art, but also the performance of operas and ballets in her honor. She also donated to the construction of schools and hospitals, engaged in charitable works, and continued projects that Henry IV had begun before his death.[43]

Maria's position, upon her return to Paris, was not unique for a queen mother. Caterina de' Medici, Maria's predecessor and distant relative, had found herself in a similar situation sixty years earlier. Caterina had needed to present an image that would allow her to assume the Regency on behalf of her youngest son. Caterina achieved this through a propaganda campaign that presented a specific public image – both in her public appearances and in the works of art she commissioned. The idea was to illustrate that she ruled in the names of her late husband, King Henry II, and her son, the future king, and that she was the best candidate to assume the Regency because of her relationship to them. In commissioning and decorating the Luxembourg palace Maria would use Caterina's imagery as an example, for she had not only held influence and power over the government from 1560, until her death in 1589, but over successive kings as well.

Caterina de' Medici

Caterina de' Medici, the last woman to have been queen, regent and queen mother in France, was not only Maria's distant relative but also her predecessor to the French throne. Her rise to power was similar to Maria's and she faced similar problems upon the unexpected death of her husband, Henri II, in 1559. Born 1519, in the legitimate line of descent from Lorenzo the Magnificent, Caterina was married off to Francis I's youngest son, Henri, duc d'Orléans in 1533. As would be Maria's, this was a politically motivated

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became liberators and deliverers. Ironically, now that a woman was guarding the throne, the very law designed to protect the French monarchy placed it in jeopardy." (8 – 9) For an understanding of the Salic law, how it was interpreted in the seventeenth century and how Maria de' Medici used it to her benefit consult Elaine Rubin, *The Heroic Image: Women and Power in Early Seventeenth-Century France* (Ph.D. dissertation, George Washington University, 1977) 1 - 164.

[43] A large part of this campaign included Maria presenting herself as a heroine or ideal monarch. This was achieved by appropriating iconography from various sources including 1) classical iconography, 2) Medici themes, 3) court emblems, 4) Caterina de' Medici's imagery, 5) images of marriage, and 6) images of illustrious and virtuous women. Each of these elements are found in commissions destined for the Luxembourg Palace and in the symbolism of the building itself. Deborah Marrow discusses *how* Maria transformed this iconography to support the desired image she wanted to project, *The Art Patronage of Maria de' Medici* 55 – 72.

marriage beneficial to both the Medici and Valois dynasties.[44] On August 10, 1536 the Dauphin, François, suddenly died, leaving Henri, duc d'Orléans, next in line for the throne of France. When Francis I died on March 31, 1547, Henri II assumed the throne and Caterina became Queen of France. Caterina had little political influence during her husband's reign. Instead of looking to his wife for advice on affairs of state, Henri II relied on his ministers and particularly upon his mistress, Diane de Poitiers. Caterina gave birth to twelve children (seven that would survive past childhood) thus ensuring her position after Henri's death as mother to the future king. Although resistant to having his wife involved in governmental affairs, Henri had her crowned as Queen on June 10, 1549.

Marriage was an important tool in determining political alliances in the sixteenth century. With this in mind Henri II and Caterina married their offspring to various houses of Europe. In 1559, a double marriage took place: Elizabeth was offered to King Philip II of Spain and Claude to Charles III, the Duke of Lorraine. The marriage festivities took place over several weeks with a jousting competition as the climactic event. Henri insisted on taking part in this event and, in the chivalric tradition, wore the colors of his lady – in this case the black and white of his favorite mistress, Diane de Poitiers.[45] Though intended as a display of the King's military might, Henri's opponent managed to pierce his helmet with a lance and a splinter became lodged in his eye socket. The wound developed into an abscess and, ten days later caused Henri's death on July 10, 1559. Henri's eldest son, Francis II, had already attained his majority and the crown passed to him without dispute. With Henri's passing, Diane de Poitiers lost her influence in affairs of government and Caterina received the title of Queen Mother. Francis II's reign lasted only two years due to his sudden death in 1560. Next in line for the throne was ten-year-old Charles IX. A Regency had to be established for the young king until he reached his majority at the age of fourteen. Although from a historical stance it seemed logical for the Queen Mother to take the reigns of government, Sheila ffolliott has observed that:

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[44] Consult R. J. Knecht, *Catherine de Medici* (London: Longman, 1998) 1 – 17.
[45] Sheila ffolliott, "Catherine de' Medici as Artemisia: Figuring the Powerful Widow" *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Margaret Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986) 227.

> the queen mother faced an uphill battle; she had to make herself appear the most likely person to take charge of the government. France, because the Salic Law had been interpreted as prohibiting female succession to the throne, was unused to being ruled by women. Catherine staged her campaign for the regency in two related ways: first, she carefully defined how she would appear in public; and second, she contrived her own official imagery. Both strategies were designed to be consonant with what was considered proper for a woman while also allowing the queen to assert herself[46]

Beginning with Henri II's untimely demise Caterina wore black as a sign of mourning, which underlined her status as a widow and forged a permanent link with her deceased husband. Black was also the color worn by many Catholic rulers of the time including Charles V, Philip II, and Caterina's late spouse. By wearing colors associated with contemporary male monarchs she presented herself as possessing similar qualities and could, therefore, be seen as Henri's logical replacement.

Because the crown passed from male to male, Caterina did not assume the Regency through a dynastic right. Because Catherine's position depended on her relationships both with the old king and with her son she needed imagery based on her status as a widowed mother. To achieve this she first built a monument that forged a permanent link between husband and wife in the minds of the public. Then, she displayed images of her most important duty as a regent and queen mother – to educate the young king. Finally, she illustrated her competence in administering the realm and her ability in safeguarding it for the continued glory of France and the Valois line. As a woman, she could not avail herself of imagery normally associated with men (images of military might). For this reason she concentrated on the constructing of monuments and the commissioning of artistic works, of which there was a "queenly" tradition in France.[47]

Although Caterina was aware of the role that art could play in the service of politics, she had to be careful not to appropriate traditionally male images to popularize her cause since she would be charged with employing her gender to usurp established male roles and power. She had to find ways to express her ideas, concerns, and

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[46] ffolliott, *Catherine de' Medici as Artemisia* 228.

interpretations of events in a manner acceptable for a woman. Caterina's solution was to appropriate the story of Artemisia.[48] In 1562, Nicolas Houel, a high placed courtier, presented Caterina with the *Histoire de la Royne Arthémise*. Although never published, this manuscript circulated at court. The *Histoire* presents Caterina as Artemisia and recounts an idealized biography of the Queen. Although little was known of Artemisia's life, Houel created a biography of Artemisia that mirrored the life of Caterina de' Medici. The introduction to the *Histoire* makes it clear that Artemisia, because of her status as an ideal woman, would be a perfect model for Caterina. It also indicated that Artemisia possessed all the male virtues necessary to make a capable ruler. The text of the *Histoire* was accompanied with detailed illustration, attributed to Antoine Caron, depicting important scenes in the life of the Queen. These drawing were to be used as models for the cartoons for the tapestries that were planned to decorate Caterina's residences. With this in mind, we can understand one function of the text as a narrative to a set of tapestries that would have been viewed by the court.[49]

Illustrations of Artemisia-Caterina centered on activities that either showed a relationship to one of the two kings, in whose name she was ruling, or as a competent administrator of the realm. ffolliott provides the example that she may be seen

> arranging for the funeral of her deceased husband, planning the construction of his funeral monument, supervising the education of her young son – invented by Houel to correspond to Charles IX – and administering the interim government.[50]

By depicting those particular events in the life of the Queen, and by associating herself with Artemisia, was intended to popularize the notion that Caterina was the single individual who should retain the seat of power. Caterina's queenly successor, Maria de' Medici, would appropriate this type of imagery by presenting images of herself that

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[47] Consult Thomas Tolley, "States of Independence: Women Regents as Patrons of the Visual Arts in Renaissance France," *Renaissance Studies* 10 No. 2 (1996): 237-258.

[48] Sheila ffolliott writes that Artemisia was "queen of Caria in Asia Minor in the fourth century BC... After the death of her husband, Mausolus, she ruled Caria in her own right and supervised the building of the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, a funerary monument... Artemisia, then, was celebrated as being something that none of the immortals could ever be: a widow. She proved the perfect prototype for Caterina in that she both dramatically mourned the loss of her husband – the rightful monarch – and stood as an authoritative ruler in his stead. *Catherine de' Medici as Artemisia* 230.

[49] ffolliott, *Catherine de' Medici as Artemisia* 231.

popularized her relationship with two successive kings and which showed her as a competent administrator of the realm. This would be a uniting conceit behind the construction and decoration of the Luxembourg palace, and especially in the manner that the Medici and Henry IV cycles would be commissioned.

Caterina's major building project after the death of Henri II was the funerary monument for the Valois dynasty. Sheila ffolliott notes that

> One of the major focuses of the queen's artistic patronage after the death of Henri II was the creation of his funerary monument. She planned a dynastic chapel for the house of Valois that would hold not only the tombs of her husband and herself but also those of their children. As a foreigner and a widow, she must have realized that her continued popularity with the French depended upon their perceiving her loyalty to France and its future through her devotion to her Valois family the most concrete demonstration that she could make of her continued devotion to the memory of her husband, as well as of her hopes for the future of France, was this lavish monument with whose construction her name would invariably associated. Not only would the monument itself serve to express this loyal desire but the illustration of its prototype in the series of tapestries chronicling the life of Artemisia would make its presence known wherever she chose to display them.[51]

As Caterina commissioned a monument to link her name with that of the Valois dynasty and King Henri II, so also was Maria to construct the Luxembourg palace with similar objectives. In looking at Caterina de' Medici's patronage, the importance of establishing a distinct relationship with her deceased husband becomes clear. Caterina achieved this by building a mausoleum in his honor and by incorporating and popularizing this event, and others, in the life of Artemisia-Caterina. Maria adopted the idea of exploiting her relationship with her deceased husband by building the Luxembourg in his honor, and by illustrating his life as a precursor, or pendant, to her own. Clearly, the legacy of Artemisia-Caterina was not lost on Maria.

Maria puts her heritage into practice

Maria's Florentine education included the traditional female pursuits of history, manners and character as well as the more masculine fields of mathematics, rhetoric and

[50] ffolliott, *Catherine de' Medici as Artemisia* 232.
[51] ffolliott, *Catherine de' Medici as Artemisia* 236.

the arts. Maria was particularly privileged as her education also included the art of politics and the politics of art.[52] After her return from exile, she, as the Queen Mother, was able to make use of this heritage while overseeing the construction and decoration of the Luxembourg Palace. The Queen Mother's decision to build the Luxembourg Palace was an indirect result of her greatest diplomatic coup – the double marriage of Louis XIII to the Spanish Infanta, and Mme Elizabeth to the future King Philip IV.[53] Moreover, Maria did not want to continue living in the Louvre both for reasons of comfort and because she felt she deserved her own residence, with an independent court.[54] With this in mind, in 1615, she began her future official domicile – the Luxembourg palace. Although unfinished when she had to flee Paris in 1617, construction resumed in 1621 when she regained royal favor and once again took up occupancy in the capital. The Luxembourg was to be Maria's personal residence from where she would execute official duties. Like many French palaces, the Luxembourg had two long ceremonial galleries, beyond which were an array of rooms with different functions including those where Maria would receive her guests. There were traditionally two sets of corridors and rooms: one for the King and another for the Queen.[55]

Because Maria wished for every charitable act and public appearance to contribute to her propaganda campaign she had to convince both the public and nobles that she had always been, and would always be, the consort to Henry IV, living for his glory, for that of Louis XIII, and for France herself. One way to illustrate that Henry IV had been and continued to be the guiding hand in her life, was to design the Luxembourg in his honor. It is possible that Maria appropriated this type of propaganda from her Medici predecessor, Caterina de' Medici, whose decision to build a Valois mausoleum was

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[52]When Maria ordered the French architect Solomon de Brosse to design and build the Luxembourg she ordered him to pattern it on the Pitti Palace. For a full study of the construction of the Luxembourg, why the site was chosen, how it came into being and all the other works that were commissioned for the building consult Marie-Noëlle Baudouin-Matuszek et al. *Marie de Médicis et le Palais Du Luxembourg* (Paris: Délégation à l'Action Artistique de la Ville de Paris, 1991) 170 – 223.

[53] The Infanta Anna, as France's new queen, would take over the rooms in the Louvre formerly occupied by Maria, forcing the Queen Mother into other accommodations.

[54] She complained of drafty corridors and cold floors.

[55] It was because there was a pressing need for Maria to move into her new home that construction and decoration of her gallery came first, and not because, as C.V. Wedgwood states, she "typically put herself first" C.V. Wedgwood, *The World of Rubens: 1577-1640* (Alexander, Vi: Time-Life, 1967) 101.

inspired by her desire to solidify her relationship with Henri II in the eyes of the public. In building the Luxembourg, Maria was hoping to establish a similar connection with her deceased husband, King Henry IV.[56] When Maria commissioned the Luxembourg, she requested that it be constructed as if inhabited by the royal couple – attested to in the construction of two long galleries, one dedicated to the Queen and the other to the King, with specifications that both should have private apartments and reception rooms.[57]

The idea of Henry IV expressing his will through his regent, both during Maria's regency and after her return from exile, is found in many aspects of Maria's propaganda campaign. Soon after Henry IV's death, court writers and panegyrists wrote pamphlets, ballets and festivals popularized this idea. It was often mentioned that upon the King's death, Maria was "transformed" and she was given masculine attributes normally reserved for the King. Elaine Rubin notes that these ideas are found in court pamphlets such as the *Prosopopée historique et allitographie du bon heur de la France* (1612). Aside from comparing Maria to the great women of the past it

> also declared that Henry IV's virtues did not die with him but rather continued through Marie – not, insignificantly enough, through Louis. The embodiment of Marie with Henry's masculine heroic qualities emphasized royal continuity. In addition, it symbolized sexual compotency and strength for Marie was the reincarnation of the heroic male (Henry) and equally endowed with the positive mystical attributes of the female.[58]

Maria's propaganda campaign strove to convince the court and the wider public that the King would live on in the body of his queen, and the state would be ruled accordingly. When arguing the legitimacy of her rule Maria had to illustrate that she carried on the same policies as Henry IV, both foreign and domestic, and that there was no break between reigns of husband and wife. It also had to be shown that she never took the power for her own glorification but for that of her husband, son, and France herself. Most importantly, Maria needed to popularize that she had always ruled in the name of Henry

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[56] For Caterina de' Medici's patronage, consult Marie-Noëlle Baudouin-Matuszek et al. *Paris et Catherine de Médicis* (Paris: Délégation à l'Action Artistique de la Ville de Paris, 1989) and Sheila ffolliott, *Catherine de' Medici as Artemisia* 227 – 241.

[57] For an understanding of the importance of residences, their function and layout with respect to courtly society, consult Norbert Elias, *The Court Society* (tr. Edmund Jephcott. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher Limited, 1983) 1 – 77.

IV and Louis XIII and for no other reasons, be it personal or political. This is illustrated in Rubens' Medici gallery, which is only explicitly, understood when read in relation with the gallery of Henry IV.

An important component of Maria's propaganda campaign was the decoration of the long ceremonial gallery of her newly built palace. If finances had permitted, Maria would have commissioned the weaving of tapestries (as did Caterina). But because costs had to be kept to a minimum, she contented herself with a series of paintings. After much deliberation between Maria, Claude Maugis and Richelieu, Peter Paul Rubens was invited to Paris to discuss the project to decorate the galleries. By January 11, 1622, Rubens had arrived in Paris. He signed a contract February 24 and was on his way back to Antwerp by February 26. In the contract Rubens agreed to paint twenty-four canvases depicting "la vie très illustre et gestes héröiques" of the Queen, for the West Gallery, and twenty-four canvases depicting the life of King Henry IV for the East Gallery.[59] Concerning the second gallery, the original contract stated:

> And in regard to the gallery on the other side, which is not yet finished, the said Rubens agrees to make and to paint with his own hand all the paintings which will have to be placed and fastened in the places determined for each; and to represent and paint in the aforementioned paintings all the battles of the deceased King Henry the Great, the encounters he was engaged in, his combats, conquests, and sieges of towns with the Triumphs of said victories in the manner of the triumphs of the Romans in accordance with the instruction which will be given to him by her Majesty. . . .
>
> And the said Rubens promises also that at the same time of the delivery of the first twelve picture [for the Medici gallery] he will submit to Madame the Queen the designs [sketches] which he will have made of the battles of the deceased King Henry the Great for the other gallery of her Majesty . . .[60]

As with other seventeenth-century grand decorative cycles, the forty-eight canvases ordered from Rubens were to complete an idea within a pre-existing space,

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[58] Rubin 71

[59] When referring to each gallery, as a whole, the following labels are used: 'west gallery' for the queen's and the 'east gallery' for the king's. When discussing the internal disposition of the paintings the same set of cardinal points are used, using the disposition of the paintings as orientation. Thus, the end walls with the fireplace are the southern ends, and the opposite walls, with the large canvases, are the northern ends.

[60] Julius Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* 123.

thereby creating an integrated work of art, or *un bel composto*, out of the Luxembourg Palace. As with the Basilica of St. Peter's in Rome, whose focal point is the crossing, the Luxembourg's is found in the northern ends of the two long galleries. The end of each gallery was to contain three extra large paintings – described as the aesthetic and narrative focus of each cycle, and the palace as a whole. Although located in different galleries they are connected in both their physical location and in their iconography. They present a unified scheme: the natural succession of Maria as regent following the assassination of Henry IV, a continuation of a reign bringing positive effects, and Maria ruling in the name of Henry IV and Louis XIII. Found in both the architecture of the Luxembourg and in its artistic decorations, these ideas are especially considered in Rubens' Medici cycle. The themes, already found in the Medici cycle, take on their full significance when read in relation to the unfinished series of Henry IV. Had the King's life been completed, an irrefutable discourse on the legitimacy of Maria's reign would have been present for all the court to see. It would have provided unequivocal proof of the legitimacy of Maria's right to rule, the positive course of action she took as regent, the continuity in policy between reigns of husband and wife, and how Maria triumphed within the limitations imposed upon her gender by seventeenth-century society. The wording of the contract indicates that the two cycles were to be read in unison. After delivering the first twelve pictures for the Queen's gallery, Rubens was to present twelve sketches for the King's gallery for the court's approval. This was demanded of Rubens in order to synchronize subject matter and to ensure that the idea of Maria ruling in Henry's name could not be misunderstood.

6. Life of Henry IV

When examining Maria de' Medici's patronage for the Luxembourg palace, her objective must be remembered: the legitimization of the transfer of power from Henry IV to his queen, and thus the legitimacy of her own regency. Maria wanted to popularize the notion that she only held power on behalf of Henry IV during the minority of her son, Louis XIII, and that she strictly followed the King's policies after his death. Since she received her power from Henry IV, it had to be illustrated that *his* authority was legitimate and unquestionable. For this reason, it was imperative to present the life of Henry IV as a precursor to her own. It was important to present *his* reign as genuine, as well as the political philosophy that he espoused and followed during those years. It thus becomes necessary for our understanding to examine the events in the King's life. Particularly vital is the investigation of the political and military maneuverings that Henry affected at the end of his career, since these have caused the greatest confusion in understanding the two cycles. An examination of his life explains why Rubens said in a letter to the French antiquarian Peiresc, "for the future I believe there will not fail to be difficulties over the subjects of the other gallery, which ought to be easy and free from scrupules. The theme is so vast and so magnificent that it would suffice for ten galleries,"[61] and in a letter to Pierre Dupuy; "I have now begun the designs for the other Gallery which I believe, according to the quality of the subject, will succeed better than the first, so that I hope to rise higher rather than to decline."[62]

Henry de Bourbon-Navarre was born on December 13, 1553, at Pau, near the Franco-Spanish border. His parents were Antoine de Bourbon, duc de Vendôme, and Jeanne d'Albret, Queen of Navarre. Through his father's lineage, Henry was in the sole legitimate line of descent from the Capetian kings of France. Although a potential candidate for the crown, it was doubtful that he would ascend to the throne since Caterina de' Medici had already born three sons to the reigning King Henri II, and would soon bear him a fourth.

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[61] Magurn 109-110.
[62] Magurn 234.

During Henry's early years, his family was caught in the middle of the rapidly expanding struggle between Protestants and Catholics in France. Antoine de Bourbon allied himself with the Protestant forces but soon changed sides and was mortally wounded in battle against them. Henry's mother embraced the Protestant faith and publicly announced her Calvinism on Christmas 1560. Henry, who was sixteen when his mother became a devout follower of Protestantism, was brought up according to its strict principles. Henry's religious affiliations were to be a major issue of debate in his ascendancy to the throne. At this same time, Henry received his military training and played a part in the religious wars that raged in France from 1567 on. In 1568 Jeanne d'Albret moved to La Rochelle to take part in the religious wars and placed her son into the charge of Louis I de Bourbon, prince of Condé, who was both her brother-in-law and leader of the Protestant (Huguenot) forces. The Protestants were defeated at Jarnac on March 13, 1569, by the duc d'Anjou (the future King Henry III) and prince Condé was killed. Henry was named head of the army, yet Gaspard de Coligny – who gave Henry his military education – exercised actual command. Henry and his cousin, Henri, the young prince of Condé, fought side by side (and lost), at the Battle of Moncontour in October of 1569. Only in 1570 was Henry truly initiated on the battlefield when he led the first charge of the Huguenot cavalry, in a long campaign extending from Poitou to the heart of Burgundy. Peace between the Protestant and Catholic forces was established in August 1570, and a very liberal edict was granted to the Protestants.

This precarious peace was to be strengthened by a marriage alliance between Prince Henry of Navarre and a daughter of Caterina de' Medici, Marguerite de Valois — a project previously considered by Henri II before his death.[63] Marriage negotiations lasted until the spring of 1572 when Jeanne, who had journeyed to Paris ahead of her son, died, making Henry *King of Navarre and sovereign lord of Béarn*. Henry and Marguerite exchanged vows on August 18 before the main portal of Notre-Dame Cathedral. Having

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[63] Politically motivated marriages, to establish a peace or to extend the influence of a dynasty, were a common occurrence throughout history. Already an important aspect of sixteenth-century politics, it would be continued in the seventeenth century by Henry IV and Maria de' Medici who married their children to the various houses of Europe to spread their influence, solidify peace accords, and for other politically motivated reasons.

married Marguerite, Henry was now within the royal entourage. A week later, on August 23 – 24, King Charles IX ordered the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in which many Protestant leaders were murdered. At first Henry was protected, but he was soon given an ultimatum: conversion to the Catholic Church, or death. Instead of making what would have been a futile heroic gesture, Henry was re-admitted to the Catholic faith on September 26, 1572. Although he took up the faith in public, in actuality, he played a double game, and bided his time. He remained at the French court for three and a half years, first under King Charles IX, and then under King Henry III, fooling everyone during this time. At the beginning of 1576 Henry escaped from the royal entourage and rejoined the Protestant forces who would take up arms at the end of that year. In May 1576, the Edict of Beaulieu was promulgated, giving Henry the *gouvernement* of Guyenne. Following his escape from the royal court and his reunion with the Protestant forces, Henry was expected to return loudly to Protestantism. However, he took over four months to come to this decision, which he sealed by formally abjuring Catholicism at Niort on June 13, 1576. Floundering between religions would set the tone for the future of his reign in theological, political, and even amorous spheres. Henry was more concerned with uniting the country than with his own religious affiliations. Evidence to support this idea exists in the manner that he treated Protestant and Catholic enemies alike, as illustrated in a letter he wrote to one of his Catholic captains:

> Those who unswervingly follow their conscience are of my religion, as I am of all those who are brave and virtuous . . . And I shall soon be able to see my true-hearted followers who wish to acquire honour with me, among whom I hope always to find you.[64]

When battle broke out again in 1577, Henry realized that a prolonged civil war would not gain him or his country anything. Thus, he convinced the Protestants to accept the conditions of the Treaty of Bergerac, which was signed in September. Caterina de' Medici, Queen Mother of France and political overlord, began to worry about Henry's consolidation of power in the south-west. With several members of the royal circle in tow, Caterina visited Henry between September 1578 and April 1579, ostensibly in order

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[64]David Buisseret, *Henry IV* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1984) 10.

to discuss the Treaty of Bergerac. In reality she wished to lure him back to court where she could maintain a watchful eye on his activities. Her political manœuverings failed, yet she left behind Henry's wife, Marguerite, for whom he did not care. In the spring of 1580, Henry again went to war and captured Cahors in a famous raid consisting of four to five days of hand-to-hand combat. Between 1580 and 1584, Henry consolidated his political allies as well as his territories in the south-west and in the north. During these years, it became clear that Henry might come in line for the throne, because both the King and the Duke d'Alençon were childless. On the death of the King's brother, François, duc d'Anjou in 1584, Henry de Bourbon-Navarre became heir presumptive to the throne of France.

This situation triggered the 'War of the Three Henry's', which ended in 1589 with the assassination of King Henry III. Due to his Protestant affiliations, the Pope excommunicated Henry of Navarre and ruled him out of line for the succession of the throne. The militant Catholics of the Holy League also opposed his accession. Headed by Henri, duc de Guise and his brothers, the group claimed to be the defenders of the ancestral faith of France. The League was supported by the Spanish and increasingly relied on them, thereby seriously threatening French independence. Henry III first allied himself with Henry of Navarre between May 1584 and June 1585, at which time the Duc de Guise was their common enemy. After July 1585, the King was forced into an uneasy alliance with the Guises. The King mistakenly thought that through an alliance he could control the Catholic League. Instead, he was forced to sign the Treaty of Nemours, which rescinded all previous edicts that granted some degree of recognition to the Protestants. Rather than allying himself with the League, Henry was absorbed by it. Henry of Navarre, a moderate Protestant, waged military as well as psychological warfare against the League in the form of pamphlets that appealed to all classes of France. This was deemed necessary because of the widespread fear in accepting a Protestant king, which grew out of the recent events in England, where Elizabeth I had persecuted Catholics *en masse*.

The tide began to turn for Henry at the battle of Coutras (October 20 1587), where his army outmaneuvered and outfought the opposing battalion with only a fraction of the men of the opposing army. Coutras was both a political and military victory for Henry

because two of the young Catholic stepbrothers of the Prince of Condé had fought with the King of Navarre. The League made it clear that they were no longer simply involved in a religious conflict, but one of dynastic and nationalistic proportions. The League's choice for the future ruler of France makes this clear: the daughter of Philip II of Spain and Elisabeth de Valois (daughter of Caterina de' Medici). By 1588, Henry III was (unwillingly) under total control of the Guises and the League, which had captured Paris. The King, backed into a corner, thought that his problems would be solved by ordering the murder of the Duke of Guise and his brother the Cardinal, on December 23, 1588. The assassination did not have the desired effect, and the League's power burgeoned. The King, who was now living in freedom, entered first into negotiations, and then into an alliance with Henry of Navarre on April 30 1589. Henry III was stabbed on August 1 and died the following day, but not before proclaiming the head of the House of Bourbon, first prince of the blood, as his successor in accordance with dynastic law. Henry of Navarre thus became Henry IV, King of France.

Again, Henry's religious loyalties were subject to religious pressures. He was confronted by an assemblage of nobles who told him that with the assumption of the throne he should embrace Catholicism, or, at least, take instruction in it. Instead of bowing to such influences, Henry acted as he had in 1584, by putting off any firm decision until a later date. On August 4, 1589, he declared that he would

> 'maintain and conserve within the realm the catholic, apostolic and Roman faith in its entirety, without altering anything', and that he was 'ready and desired nothing more than to be instructed in the said religion by a good, legitimate and free general national council, so as to follow and observe whatever might be concluded there'.[65]

From this moment, Henry's armies met victory upon victory, the most notable being those at Arques on September 21, 1589 and at Ivry on March 14, 1590. Yet, he would not regain Paris until 1594. Finally, on July 25, 1593, the King abjured Calvinism in the basilica of Saint-Denis. Although of dubious sincerity, the conversion brought quick results, since many towns and nobles wanted a king, any king, so long as he was a Catholic king. Soon after his conversion, many towns submitted and pledged allegiance

to Henry's forces and he was finally crowned at Chartres on February 27, 1594. On March 22 the first Bourbon king was able to enter Paris, and on September 17, 1595 Pope Clement VIII removed the ban of excommunication. In the following years Henry IV waged a successful war against Spain in order to expel the Spanish from Burgundy, while also managing to bring Brittany into his realm. This last effort was accomplished without bloodshed — by arranging a marriage between Françoise de Lorraine and César de Vendôme, the eldest of his two sons by his favorite mistress Gabriel d'Estrées. On April 13, 1598, in a wish for tolerance throughout his kingdom, he signed the Edict of Nantes, proclaiming freedom of conscience for Protestants and granting them hundreds of places of refuge.

Having united the kingdom and with the achievement of peace at home and abroad, Henry and his ministers realized the need to settle the issue of succession to the throne. Henry had been married since 1572 to Marguerite de Valois, yet she had not born him any children. Henry had two sons from Gabriel d'Estrées, his favorite mistress, whom he would have married if given the chance. Had this occurred it would have surely sent France into an extended civil war of succession after the King's death. The King was able to have his marriage annulled, but only after Gabrielle had passed away.

The annulment of Henry's marriage to Marguerite de Valois allowed Henry to marry a Tuscan princess, Maria de' Medici, by proxy in October 1600 at the Florentine Duomo. Soon after her arrival in France, the couple consummated their marriage. Maria gave birth to the Dauphin, the future Louis XIII, on September 27, 1601, and paved the way for an easy transfer of power from father to son.

Henry's reign, following his union with Maria, can be viewed as a rebuilding for France, which required that time could not be wasted in war. Between 1598 and 1609, Henry worked to bring peace to Europe, enabling France to recover and rebuild after thirty-five years of war. Within France, Henry attempted to strengthen ties between the Catholics and Protestants and his foreign policy aimed at peace with the main powers of Europe. His peace-oriented policies may be seen in his marriage negotiations with Spain

[65] Buisseret 28.

that lasted from 1601 to 1609/10, since they were interrupted by a military campaign and Henry's assassination. Maria later took them up again in her role as regent, thus continuing the established policies in the name of her deceased husband.[66]

The period of peace ended in 1609, when Henry prepared the country for war. At this point, the separation of myth from fable becomes imperative in order to understand the genesis and execution of both the Medici and Henry IV galleries. The notion of a "Grand Design" envisaged by Henry IV to consolidate French national forces and bring about the decline of Habsburg power, the political reorganization of Europe, and everlasting peace, is a myth.[67] Henry's actions around 1609 are often thought to represent the initial stages of his Grand Design. But as Michael Hayden points out

> the suspicion in Europe at the time was that it had all happened because a fifty-five-year-old lecher wanted a new mistress - sixteen year old Charlotte de Montmorency, the wife of the Prince of Condé... Possibly Sully's original reason for concocting the story of the Grand Design was to cover up for Henry.[68]

In 1609, after peaceful overtures with almost every European country, Henry prepared for war by rebuilding his army, and crowning his wife first as regent and then as queen. He rallied his allies (the English, Dutch, and German princes) to aid in an attack on the Rhine. But before he could take action, tell anyone when he would march, what his goals were, or why he had changed his policy, he was assassinated on May 14, 1610.

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[66] Michael Hayden points out that in 1611-12, soon after Maria took the reigns of government, and "after immediate problems had been taken care of and the basic policy of a marriage alliance with Spain had been decided, ambassadors were sent to England, Germany, Spain, and Savoy with new instructions. The message given to Europe was that the Spanish-French marriage alliance was necessary to guarantee peace for Europe and that Henry IV had been involved in such negotiations until the time of his death... the 1612 instructions can be compared with those that Henry IV gave to his ambassadors in late 1609 and early 1610. They turn out to be quite similar." "Continuity in the France of Henry IV and Louis XIII: French Foreign Policy, 1598 – 1615," *Journal of Modern History* 45 (1973): 15 – 16.

[67] See Hayden 1-23, for a full explanation of Henry's motives concerning the Cleves, Julich issue of 1609 and other examples of Maria's continuation of Henry's policies during her regency. See also Tapié, *France in the Age of Louis XIII and Richelieu*, for a good account of the political and social background of France that affected state policy during the reigns of both Maria de' Medici and Louis XIII. Tapié is also in agreement that there was no such thing as a *grand dessein*: "We can take it as certain that Henry IV never entertained thoughts of a *grand dessein* or grandiose scheme for Europe such as Sully described in his memoirs" (65) and that "The legend that Henry IV had a great plan for the future of Europe was refuted in an article by Christian Pfister which was published in the *Revue historique* as long ago as 1894. But legends take a remarkably long time to die! How many people, one wonders, still believe in this one?" (470, n12).

[68] Hayden 4.

One commonly held explanation for Henry's actions relates to his reputation as a lady's man. Charlotte de Montmorency had become the latest object of Henry's amorous pursuits and he believed that the easiest way to possess her was to see her married to one of the princes of the blood. These individuals are bound to stay at court, which would facilitate Henry's advances on Charlotte. The Prince of Condé and Charlotte were married on May 17, 1609. Condé betrayed the King by fleeing to the Spanish Netherlands, instead of returning to court as was demanded after their honeymoon. Henry announced that if the governor of the Spanish Netherlands, the archduke Albert, or his brother-in-law, Philip III of Spain, did not ensure Condé's return to France, action would be taken.

Another reason to mobilize his army was the question of who should inherit the lands of the Duke of Cleves (consisting of Cleves, Jülich, Berg, and Mark). The Duke had died in March of 1609. Hayden points out that these territories

> were not large but they were densely populated, wealthy, and strategically located astride the Meuse and the Rhine. At stake were the borders of the Spanish Netherlands and the United Provinces, a significant stretch of the Rhine, the fate of the developing Counter Reformation in Cologne and Westphalia, and an important link in the Spanish and Austrian supply lines.[69]

Henry's decision to support the Protestant claimants was more fortuitous to his long-term political goals, as well as to his short term amorous ones. Endorsing this group would allow him to gain an alliance with the League of Protestant Princes, as well as to fight the Spanish, who were still sheltering Condé. By opposing the Spanish forces, Henry wanted to send a message to the papacy and to the rest of Europe that he was working for a peaceful resolution of conflict within Christendom, while the Habsburgs were working solely for their own political gain. However, Henry was assassinated before any military action got underway. Michael Hayden has argued that by examining the political situation of Europe, the deployment of French troops, the needs and capabilities of the French army and Henry's historic diplomatic action since 1598, we can see the reality is that "Henry wanted to do no more in 1610 than stop the recent Spanish pressures, keep the

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[69] Hayden 7.

Habsburgs from the Rhine, and build up a system of alliances."[70] After Henry's death, Maria assumed the Regency and followed the King's policies as closely as possible. She would later ask to have this depicted in many scenes executed by Rubens for the Luxembourg palace.

Viewing Henry's policies in this manner highlights the many dilemmas in interpreting the Luxembourg cycles. These difficulties may be seen in an explanation of the Maria de' Medici cycle by Otto Georg von Simson of 1944 which appeared in the *Review of Politics*, entitled "Richelieu and Rubens; Reflections on the Art of Politics." Simson bases his assumptions on the following:

> During the seven years of her regency, the eleven of her political life, Marie de' Medici, a granddaughter of the Emperor Ferdinand, had become identified with a definite political pattern: with the idea of peace and collaboration among the Catholic powers which, under Habsburg leadership, was to have revived the unity of the Middle Ages. However feebly and irrationally conceived by the Queen, here definitely was one alternative of French politics. But another was about to emerge, envisaged already by Henry IV though cut short by his premature death: that of consolidating French national power for an ultimate showdown with the Habsburgs in Germany and Flanders and Spain. History has identified Richelieu with this concept as it has Marie de' Medici with the other[71]

Von Simson takes Maria's policies to an extent not envisaged by her. Maria wanted to continue Henry's designs, including the quick resolution of the Julich matter and a continuation of peace and marriage negotiations with the Spanish. At no point did Maria believe in allowing the domination of the Spanish Habsburgs, especially at the expense of France. Although understanding her policies in an unreasonable manner, von Simson did realize that the function of the Luxembourg cycles was to act as propaganda for the Queen's cause. What von Simson did *not* recognize is that the propaganda was in the tradition of the late king, and *not of Maria's own design*. Reading the two planned cycles for the Luxembourg *as a unit* supports this view.

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[70] Hayden 11.
[71] Otto Georg von Simson, "Richelieu and Rubens; Reflections on the Art of Politics," *Review of Politics* 6 (1944): 426.

It is imperative to accept that Maria continued the policies of her husband to her best abilities (and within the limits of the Regency) in order to understand the Medici and Henry cycles. Maria wished to illustrate the continuation of policy between reigns, for her power as regent rested not on a legitimate line of descent but *on relationships*. What enabled Maria to gain the power of the Regency were her position as widow to one king (Henry IV), and mother to the Dauphin (Louis XIII). Despite having been crowned, her power truly came from these relationships. Consequently, she took her cue from Caterina de' Medici, and sought to create a link with both her husband and her son. She thus continued the policies begun by Henry IV and instructed the young king in them.

Having investigated Maria's need to present a specific image of herself upon her return from exile, it should come as no surprise that she engaged the foremost painter of Europe. Peter Paul Rubens was already recognized as a master in blending art and propaganda and would again prove himself in the execution of the Medici cycle. When it came time to paint the Henry cycle, Richelieu realized that it could only work to his detriment and Maria's benefit. For this reason, he managed to stop completion of the gallery but not before Rubens was able to dream up ten episodes in the life of the King. In discussing Rubens' subjects executed for the King's gallery, the manner in which they were to contribute to Maria's political objectives becomes abundantly clear.

7. The Gallery of Henry IV

According to the contract, the Henry gallery was to represent "all the battles of the deceased King Henry the Great, the encounters he was engaged in, his combats, conquests, and sieges of towns with the Triumphs of said victories in the manner of the triumphs of the Romans."[72] The story of the King's life, unlike that of Maria's, was full of exciting events and battles to which the French looked with reverence and pride. These battles were important for Maria because they were a reflection of Henry's triumphant reign, *of which hers was an extension*. In order to emphasize this idea (one of the motivating conceits behind the two galleries) iconography, stylistics, and subject matter were harmonized.[73] The King's gallery, the east gallery, was meant to be read in a counter-clockwise manner, beginning on the east wall heading north, and then heading south on the west wall. As the viewer approaches the last scene, he is motivated to go and visit the Queen's gallery. The final picture has a movement from east to west, ushering the viewer towards a door leading to a hallway connecting the two galleries. The picture itself is also a sneak preview of the following gallery because it is the first time the viewer sees the Queen. The direction in which the pictures are read may also be associated with the *concetto* for the galleries. A counter-clockwise reading of the Henry gallery indicates a concern with the past and the clockwise examination of the Medici gallery indicates a concern with the recent past, present and future.

Scholars are unable to reconstruct the entire gallery because evidence exists for only ten of the twenty-four intended canvases.[74] Two of these compose the first and last

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[72] Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* 123.

[73] Marrow notes that "Several of the choices may have been inspired by the paintings at the Florentine funeral for Henri IV which were illustrated in the publication by Giuliano Giraldi. Marrow, *The Art Patronage of Maria de' Medici* 46. Consult Eve Borsook, "Art and Politics at the Medici Court IV: Funeral Décor for Henry IV of France," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 14 (1969): 201 – 234. It is interesting to note that the series begins with the subject of *Henry as a Child playing at Arms* and ends with the *Coronation of Maria de' Medici*.

[74] Although Held states that "we have, in one way or another, some visual evidence for nine of the paintings intended for the decoration of the Gallery of Henry IV" there are in fact ten. *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* 125. These include: 1) *Birth of Henry IV*, 2) *Reconciliation of Henry III and Henry of Navarre*, 3) *Henry IV at a Siege of a Town in Normandy* (Caen or Amiens?), 4) *Henry IV at the Battle of Arques*, 5) *Henry IV of France Outside of Paris*, 6) *The Battle of Ivry*, 7) *The Triumph of Henry IV*, 8) *The Capture of Paris*, 9) *The Coronation of Henry IV*, 10) *The Union of Maria de' Medici and Henry IV*.

fields, indicated by their narrow size. Three others were to occupy the extra long fields at the end of the gallery providing an aesthetic and iconographic focus. Four more events in the life of the King were to be placed on the east wall and one more on the west. We may assume that the three fields at the southern end of the gallery, in the Medici wing filled with portraits of Maria's parents and a portrait of the Queen as Minerva, would contain a similar programme.

The Birth of Henry of Navarre

The Birth of Henry of Navarre (Fig. 1) is the first subject and meant to occupy the narrow field at the beginning of the gallery.[75] Opposite this field is a different subject (*The Union of Maria de' Medici and Henry IV*, Fig. 2), of similar dimensions, that gives the viewer a first glimpse of Maria. The birth of Henry on December 13, 1553 is depicted in a highly allegorized fashion. At the bottom is a reclining river god thought to represent the river Gave du Pau, a tributary of the Adour, which flows through Pau. The woman wearing a wall crown and holding the infant is the city of Pau where the King was born. The child's right hand is extended to receive a flaming sword from the god Mars, who is accompanied by three *putti* carrying lance and shield. Visible in the sky is the King's zodiacal sign — Sagittarius.

This birth scene is very different from Maria's, but like the Queen's, it sets the tone for the gallery. A military tone pervades this panel with the god of war and military paraphernalia – appropriate, considering the programme was to stress the King's military career. The corresponding field in the Medici gallery represents the *Fates Spin the Destiny of the Future Queen* and *The Birth of Maria de' Medici* is relegated to the second field. The two pictures in the Medici gallery can be seen as a pair, together representing the Queen's birth and setting the tone for the cycle. The *Birth of Henry* and the two canvases representing Maria's birth are not opposite but complementary. In the *Birth of Henry,* the god of war assures the King's destiny, and hence his future triumphs in

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[75] No painting exists of the subject, only a sketch executed during the 1628 campaign. The sketch is presently located in the Wallace Collection, London. Consult John Ingamells, *The Wallace Collection: Catalogue of Pictures IV; Dutch and Flemish* (London: Trustees of the Wallace Collection, 1992): 330-332.

military struggles. The first two pictures in the Queen's gallery show the results of these military triumphs – a period of prosperity and flourishing in a peaceful realm. Prof. T. Glen argues that this is found in the *Destiny*, in which the middle Fate is a painted version of a crouching Venus, representative of peace, love and beauty.[76] Millen and Wolf have pointed out that the Birth of Maria de' Medici "does not depict the birth of a girl child to the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Florence but that of the 'mythical' Maria whose *gestes héroiques* Rubens was commissioned to paint."[77] The two cycles may be viewed in a typological manner, where the promise of the old law (Henry) is fulfilled in the new (Maria). That is, the peace and prosperity that Henry fought all his life to achieve, a life cut tragically short by his untimely death, but given expression through Maria — a soldier of peace, a dedicated servant to France, and a loyal bride and mother. In short, she continued, as Henry would have until her son was old enough to rule and carry on these same policies. Further evidence of these ideas are found in the Sagittarius zodiac signs present in both Maria's *and* Henry's birth scenes, although *only Henry was born under this sign.* While some scholars claim that Rubens simply confused "her date of birth with Henri IV's"[78] we can believe that a painter and humanist of his capabilities would not make such an elementary mistake. This is especially evident when we realize to what extent Rubens informed himself on these minute details, and how profoundly disturbed he was when his works in the Medici gallery were misinterpreted.[79] Millen and Wolf see

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[76] Dr. T. Glen, *Lecture*, "The Making of Rubens: The Women in his Life," University of Montreal, March 1998.
[77] Millen and Wolf 30.
[78] Marie-Anne Lescourret, *Rubens; A Double Life* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993) 121.
[79] We see this in a letter written to Jacques Dupuy in which he corrects certain facts of a poem describing the Medici Gallery. Rubens writes: "I have read with more attention the poem on the Medici Gallery... both words and phrases seem to express readily the idea of the author... I only regret that while the subjects of the pictures are in general well explained, in certain places he has not grasped the true meaning. He says, for example, of the fourth painting: *Mariam commendat lucina Rheae* (instead of Florence) *quae tanquam nutrix ulnis excipit suam alumnam.* This error results from the similarity between the figure of a city, which is crowned with turrets, and the usual representation of Rhea or Cybele. For the same reason a similar error occurs in the ninth painting, where the author mistakes the city of Lyon, where the marriage took place, for a Cybele, because of the turreted crown and the lions drawing the chariot. But to come back to the fourth picture, the figures that he call Cupids and Zephyrs are the happy Hours attending the birth of the Queen; they can be recognized by their butterfly wings and because they are feminine. As for the youth who carries the cornucopia filled with scepters and crowns, he is the good Genius of the Queen, and at the top is found the ascendant sign of the horoscope, Sagittarius..." Magurn 149-150.

the insertion of the Sagittarius as a reflection of Maria's relationship with Henry, and consequently with the other gallery;

> If the Archer sheds his fiery light — astrologically the element that corresponds to the sign is not merely fire but "double-fire" — over the princess's birth, it is because almost a half-century later the royal archer's widow was eager, here as throughout these paintings, to insist that her entire life, from birth, was predestined by the Fates seen in the preceding canvas to take its glory from the reflected light of her future king and husband. Which would mean, as the seventeenth century would understand it, that whatever policy she might promote as regent or dowager, it would simply reflect her late husband's and, in consequence, serve his causes and purposes and France's—but France as it was at his untimely death, not the nation that had declined and threatened to fall apart under the weak kingling and his rapacious mentor-mignons.[80]

Thus, from the very first picture of the series, the reader cannot ignore the idea that Henry's promise is fulfilled in the figure of his queen.

Reconciliation of Henry III and Henry of Navarre

The next scene for which we have visual evidence takes place 36 years after Henry's birth. The panel presents a highly allegorized episode in the life of the King known as the *Reconciliation of Henry III and Henry of Navarre* (Fig. 3).[81] This event occurred on April 30, 1589, when Henry III, ousted from the Catholic League, decided to recognize Henry of Navarre as heir to the throne. The scene is depicted within an architectural setting. On the left is King Henry III under a *baldacchino*, extending his right arm to Henry of Navarre who begins to kneel in front of him. Navarre's right arm is outstretched to meet the King's, and together they hold the sceptre of France. The motif of two joined hands holding a sceptre symbolizes Concord. Behind the royal pair stands an allegorical figure, a winged genius of Concord, who holds Fraud and Discord at bay with his right hand, and holds a pole with his left. Atop the pole is a wreath with two joined hands reinforcing the idea of concord between the two kings below. Julius Held

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[80] Millen and Wolf 35. Also consult A. P. De Mirimonde, "Les allégories astrologiques dans l'histoire de Marie de Médicis peinte par Rubens," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 90 no. 1306 (1977): 155-164.

[81] Visual evidence for this subject exists in an oil sketch executed during the 1628 campaign, presently located in Rochester, New York, University of Rochester Memorial Art Gallery. Consult Julius Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* 126-127.

has observed that "the artist went still further to invest the meeting with a far-reaching significance. The transfer of the crown and the rule of France to Henry of Navarre, which took place a few months later, when Henry III was assassinated on August 1, 1589, is clearly indicated."[82] Held believes this to be indicated by the sharing of the scepter of France, Henry III draping part of the royal mantle on Navarre's shoulder, and a *putto* holding the French royal crown over the King, and looking in the direction of the future king.

Upon assumption of the Regency, and after her return from exile, the legality of Maria's reign was questioned, threatening its legitimacy in the eyes of the people. By asserting past and present legitimacy, Maria would also be insuring the succession of her son to the throne against threats made by the Prince of Condé and the children of Henriette d'Entragues. Depicting her own rule as rightful meant illustrating that Henry IV, from whom she was given authority, was himself the legitimate and rightful heir to the crown. This is an important reason why it was crucial for the second half of the Luxembourg commission to be completed: to illustrate that Henry's throne was rightfully obtained. Illustrating these ideas as fact was designed to make the dynastic right of the Bourbon line unquestionable. Not only was it necessary to popularize the notion that there had been a smooth transfer of power between the Valois and Bourbon dynasties, but that Henry IV was the ideal king, and deserving of the crown. The fact that Henry IV was deserving of the crown is presented in the following three canvases where he is depicted as possessing heroic valor. The pose he assumes recognizes him as the legitimate ruler. In the Queen's gallery, Maria is recognized as the legitimate ruler; not through traditional heroic male valor, but through her own situation as a female monarch. Canvases that illustrate this idea include *The Assumption of the Regency* and *The Coronation in St. Denis*.

The theme of reconciliation is also found in both galleries. Reconciliation is an important idea because it demonstrates that true rulers would unite in the face of adversity to rule a peaceful and fertile kingdom. This concept is represented in the *Reconciliation*

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[82] Julius Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* 127.

of Henry III and Henry of Navarre as well as in the last five panels of the Medici series that illustrating the rift and reconciliation between mother and son. The theme or reconciliation is found in each gallery in both iconography and subject matter. The second to last scene in the Medici gallery represents *The Reconciliation of Louis and Maria* in a highly allegorized fashion while the last panel, pendant to the *Destiny*, illustrates *The Triumph of Truth*. As John Rupert Martin has indicated, this last panel shows "Father Time [who] flies upward carrying his daughter Truth in order to affirm the veracity of the entire history of Maria and of its happy ending in particular."[83] Above the group of Time and Truth sits a humble Maria, and Louis who offers her a wreath containing a flaming heart and clasped hands – emblems of love and concord (Fig. 4). The astute spectator would have associated this emblem with Henry's reconciliation picture. In using similar emblems for similar purposes Rubens tells the viewer that the problems facing Maria's rule were similar to those facing Henry's – if you remember, one of the most beloved kings that France ever had. Henry gained real power only after his reconciliation with Henry III so perhaps this work was meant as a message to Louis that he should entrust Maria with a greater role in government. Thus a direct comparison between Maria's and her late husband's rule could only work to her benefit.

Siege of a Town in Normandy, The Battle of Arques, and Henry IV Outside of Paris

The next three paintings represent battle scenes. Similar in composition, all show Henry surrounded by military men in the foreground with a battle or procession in the background, and are set against a vast landscape. Perhaps intended as a monumental triptych or triad, they would give some cohesion to the gallery.[84] Ingrid Jost has attributed these works to a collaboration between Rubens and Peter Snayers.[85]

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[83] John Rupert Martin, *Baroque* (London: Penguin, 1991) 212.
[84] John Coolidge has interpreted the Medici gallery along a system of triads. If he is correct in this assumption then it is possible that the Henry gallery was also set up in this manner. Consult John Coolidge, "Rubens and the Decoration of French Royal Galleries," *Art Bulletin* 48 (1966): 67 – 70. Another argument to support this theory is that the following three canvases, occupying the long fields at the end of the gallery, are a conceptually unified group.
[85] Ingrid Jost, "Bemerkungen zur Heinrichsgalerie des P. P. Rubens," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 15 (1964): 188.

The first of the three paintings represents a *Siege of a Town in Normandy* (Fig. 5).[86] It has been argued that the scene could represent the siege of Caen or Amiens.[87] Henry, identifiable by his white plume, is in the process of mounting a horse and in discussion with two men to his right. One of the men wears armor and holds a baton; the other wears clothing and holds a hat. Both are relating something concerning the events in the background, which depicts a long line of cavalry, all holding poles with flags attached. The next painting depicting, and titled, *The Battle of Arques* (September 21 1589) (Fig. 6) represents Henry's military skill.[88] He won this battle with one thousand cavalry and four thousand infantry troops against his opponent's four thousand cavalry and twenty thousand infantry. Henry's pose emphasizes his military genius. Henry, again identifiable by his white plume, directs the army from atop his horse in the center-foreground. Behind Henry, standing on the ground, is a woman who looks further behind Henry to two cavalrymen in armor. Directly above this woman is an older man sounding a trumpet from which hangs a cloth. Henry gestures to the front, towards his cavalry, with his right hand, which yields a baton. Occupying the rest of the foreground is the cavalry, which is about to charge into the raging battle seen in the background, framed by a vast landscape. The King's forces are represented on the left and the League's on the right. Henry's forces hold their lances straight while those of the League are in disarray. More troops are seen in the distant background.

The following scene depicts *Henry IV Outside of Paris* (Fig. 7).[89] It is thought that this picture represents the battle for the suburbs of Paris. Before Henry was able to

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[86] The picture is one of the large canvases that Rubens began in 1630. It is presently located in the museum in Göteborg and there is no surviving preparatory sketch.

[87] Held, referring to Jost, mentions that the city could be Caen. *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* 125. See Ingrid Jost, "Bemerkungen zur Heinrichsgalerie des P. P. Rubens." *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*. 15 (1964): 185. Also see Björn Fredlund, "I Rubens' ateljé: tre malningar i Göteborgs Konstmuseum," in *Rubens i Sverige*, ed. Görel Cavalli-Björkman (Stockholm, 1977) 49ff., who argues that the city in the background is Amiens.

[88] Extant is an almost finished painting, today found in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich, but for which no sketch survives. It dates from the second campaign (spring 1630) to which all the large pictures belong.

[89] There is no *bozzetti* for this work, today located in the Rubenshuis in Antwerp, but a connection by Müller Hofstede has been made with an oil sketch representing the central group. For a full description of the sketch, consult Julius Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* 135 – 136. Unlike the other two battle paintings of similar size, this canvas did not survive intact. It is presently about one third the size of the other canvases due to fire damage in the twentieth century.

capture Paris in March 1594, he twice attacked the city, once in October-November 1589, and in May-September 1590. The first attack is represented since the latter came after the Battle of Ivry that is depicted in the following canvas. The campaign was not a success and Henry's army withdrew in early November. A battle of horsemen occupies the foreground. To the left is a horseman in armor; his right hand holds a baton with which he is about to give a backhanded stroke to a soldier below him. Below the rider is a fallen horse under which a man tries to emerge. Beside the horse is a soldier with a shield in one hand and a lance in the other, protecting himself from an attack by a hunched man with a sword. On the right is an armed rider, seen from behind, and accompanied by two soldiers, each holding a lance. More battles, framed by a vast landscape, rage in the background. It is undetermined whether the central horseman is Henry IV. What appears as "white fluff" above his helmet may be interpreted as a white feather, Henry's symbol. If the figure is the King, it would provide a sense of continuity since the previous two panels (also representing battles) have the King as the central personage. If this, in fact, is Henry, it would show that the King was as able a fighter as he was a commander and planner — a complete military man.

One of the principles of kingship is to possess heroic valor, and leading men into a victorious battle was an important component. It was necessary to illustrate Henry IV as a man possessing this masculine quality precisely because Maria *could not show herself in this manner*. Had Maria presented herself as such, it would have allowed her opponents to allege that she was taking over traditional masculine roles – contrary to her intentions. Once Henry was depicted as manly, Maria could then present herself as *safeguarding* this idea on behalf of Louis XIII – found in the Queen's gallery in the canvas depicting *The Victory at Jülich* (Fig. 8). The Jülich canvas is often mistaken as Maria proceeding into battle but, in actuality, it is the moment where the Regent is overseeing a peace treaty after a battle envisaged, and planned, by Henry IV. One aim of the military campaign was to bring peace to the region and to avert a war (which would, in fact, erupt during the next decade and last thirty years.) In the background one can see a ceremony, but not one of surrender. Illustrated is the generous French action of handing over the keys of the conquered city to the rightful German princes. In depicting this event, Maria is further

popularizing the notion that she followed Henry's foreign policy. By handing over the keys, Maria is effectively stating that she wishes to continue the King's policy of living at peace with one's neighbors regardless of their religion, and this includes the Huguenots living within the realm. To reinforce the idea that these actions were undertaken in Henry's name and for his glory, the artist included an eagle driving off lesser birds of prey in the sky to Maria's right. Millen and Wolf explain that

> This is Picinelli's Sinnbild for the idea of royal might ET ASPECTU FUGAT (Put to flight by the sight of him). No less pertinent is Henri's medal of 1596 in which a crowned eagle joined by two birds drives off horrid winged monsters above a barren mountainous landscape, with the motto TANTI EST PRAESENTIA REGIS (So mighty is the presence of the King).[90]

With this in mind it becomes evident that Maria was simply a stand-in for Henry IV until Louis XIII could assume the throne. Additionally, Maria does not present herself as possessing the same heroic valor as Henry. She is only the conduit by which Henry's military prowess is fully exerted.

The Battle of Ivry

The next picture is the first of three large compositions intended for the end of the long gallery. As in the Medici gallery, the three panels in this section represent a culmination and synthesis of the main themes. The first of these scenes represents *The Battle of Ivry* (Fig. 9, Fig. 10), which occupies the last field on the east wall.[91] The battle took place on March 14, 1590 and, as Buisseret has noted, clearly "marked a stage in the process by which Henry was uniting the realm under his leadership."[92] Julius Held has remarked that "the finished painting follows the sketch fairly faithfully" stating that "the main difference is a change in proportion."[93] Following the physical direction of the narrative, the royal army rushes in from the right led by the King. At the center of the composition, the King, on horseback, is about to attack the enemy leader. He holds a

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[90] Millen and Wolf 155.
[91] A sketch dating from the first campaign survives (Bayonne, Musée Bonnat) as well as a painting (Uffizi) based on the sketch dating from the second campaign.
[92] Buisseret 34.
[93] Julius Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* 127.

thunderbolt in his left hand (changed from a flaming sword in the sketch) which according to Shaw Smith is a "symbol of Jupiter's support of his cause."[94] Before the King has a chance to strike, one of Henry's soldiers pierces his opponent. The struggle among three warriors at the center of the composition is reminiscent of Leonardo's *Battle of Anghiari* (whose composition may also be found in Rubens' sketch of *Constantine Defeating Licinus*.) Held notes that many of the individual figural motifs (of horses and men) may be found in Rubens' earlier works such as several *Conversions of St. Paul*, the *Death of Decius Mus* and the *Battle of the Amazons*. Held also remarks that the composition is "strung out horizontally almost like the scenes carved on the front of an ancient sarcophagus."[95] This is not surprising when we remind ourselves that the commission explicitly states that the paintings should be "in the manner of the triumphs of the Romans." Rubens, Therefore, may have inspired himself from sarcophagus reliefs.

The Triumph of Henry IV

The scene at the north end of the gallery is *The Triumph of Henry IV* (Fig.14). We know that it was meant to adorn the end of the long gallery because it is mentioned by Rubens in a letter to Pierre Dupuy, which states that he has "made considerable progress on some of the largest and most important pieces, like the 'Triumph of the King' for the rear of the gallery."[96] The work referred to is the unfinished canvas in the Uffizi for which three sketches exist, one dating from 1628 (Fig. 11) and two from 1630 (Figs. 12 – 13). There have been many debates concerning the actual subject matter of this composition.[97] Although originally known as *The Triumphal Entry of Henry IV into Paris*, this attribution was rejected by Evers and Jost who point out that not only did Henry not actually have a triumphal entry into Paris, but this canvas actually precedes the one depicting the subjugation of Paris — a chronological discrepancy that would not have been tolerated by the artist or his advisors. Ingrid Jost saw the canvas as an allegory rather than a representation of a specific battle and subsequent triumph.[98] Held refutes this

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[94] Smith 131.
[95] Julius Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* 128.
[96] Letter dated October 1630. Magurn 369.
[97] For a full summary consult Julius Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* 128-129.
[98] Jost 175-219.

theory arguing that because of Rubens' interest in the antique he would have been hesitant to "disengage the notion of triumph from the fact of victory."[99] Held cites several examples where Rubens follows a battle scene with a triumph in similar fashion. For these reasons, he has interpreted this scene within the historical situation that prevailed after the Battle of Ivry. Examination of the wording of the contract supports Held's thesis, since Rubens was asked to paint the King's battles "with the *Triumphs* of said victories in the manner of the triumphs of the Romans." It is indicated that the Battle of Ivry was the turning point in the King's career and the last major battle fought by the King. Held argues that

> The king's triumph after this victory was thus ideally suited to adorn the north end of the gallery; the visitor would reach this turning point in Henry's career and then have to turn around. And it is hardly accidental that the palm, symbol of Victory, held by Henry in the first two sketches, was replaced in the last sketch and in the final painting by the olive branch, symbol of Peace, since all the events depicted thereafter would have shown the nonbelligerent years of Henry's reign.[100]

We shall see that this interpretation of the Triumph canvas agrees with a reading of the three large panels and how they are meant to be viewed in relation to the Queen's gallery. The direction of the procession is from east to west to encourage the viewer to continue the reading on the western wall. The procession is headed towards an arch, which reoccurs in the analogous canvas in the Queen's gallery for a very specific reason, not solely, as Held argues, "to stress the analogy with Roman triumphs."[101] The final composition parallel's Rubens' own *Triumph of the Church* (1627) in the elevated figure in a Romanesque chariot pulled by four white horses. Surrounding the chariot, are a multitude of allegorical figures, members of Henry's army, and well-wishers.[102]

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[99] Julius Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* 128.
[100] Julius Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* 129.
[101] Julius Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* 132.
[102] A complete analysis of all the figures has been attempted by Ingrid Jost although Held disagrees with several attributions. Consult note 87.

The Capture of Paris

The last of the three large canvases to adorn the end of the gallery was to be *The Capture of Paris* (Fig. 15).[103] The scene presents, in a highly allegorized form, the subjugation of Paris by Henry IV on March 22, 1594. The King's forces arrived at the gates of Paris at 4 a.m., on a morning of mist and driving rain. The gates were opened by people working with the King on the inside, including Brissac and Lhuillier, *Prévôt des marchands*, Martin Langlois the leading *échevin*, and sieur de La Chevalerie. Once inside the city, the King's forces met with very little resistance. The King was able to enter at 6 a.m. through the Porte-Neuve and proceeded to the Cathedral of Notre-Dame where he heard Mass at about 8 a.m. It had been a miraculous and almost bloodless day. The sketch depicts Henry IV standing on the left, wearing the laurel wreath of the victor, receiving the key to the city from a personification of Paris. Held believes that Henry, extending his right hand holding a sceptre towards Paris, is "possibly an allusion to the welcome given Esther by Ahasuerus."[104] This is possible considering that this is one of Rubens' favorite motifs when wanting to show a kingly unification of great import. We must look only to his sketches for the ceiling of the Jesuit Church in Antwerp and to the ceiling of the Banqueting House at Whitehall – both of which take inspiration from *Esther Crowned by Ahasuerus* by Paolo Veronese in Venice. Five soldiers stand behind the King. One holds the royal standard while another stands on a semi-naked figure lying on the ground. This figure, holding a burning torch and a snake-entwined arm, may be a representation of fury or discord. Behind the personification of Paris, are two women and two children whose poses, according to Held, express devotion and gratitude.[105] The right hand side of the panel depicts two arches of a stone bridge with figures on top. On the left hand side of the bridge is a soldier with a flag and a group of four trumpeters heralding the victory. To the right is a group of soldiers throwing bound prisoners over the bridge into the river below. One of these soldiers has a torch to remind the viewer that the subjugation took place during the early hours of the morning.

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[103] The composition survives in the form of a sketch executed in 1628 (Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie.)
[104] Julius Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* 132.

Coronation of Henry IV

In following Henry's life chronologically, we may ask why the first major ceremony of his reign was not represented. The event was his reconversion to Roman Catholicism that took place at Saint-Denis on July 25, 1593. Before explaining why this event was left out, it is instructive first to look at the scene following the *Capture of Paris* — the *Coronation of Henry IV*, which occurred on February 27, 1594.[106] Having won a decisive battle which would soon unite the kingdom, and having embraced Roman Catholicism, Henry was only lacking the third attribute of *rex*, *dux* and *sacerdos* which make up the kingly craft. He was entirely *rex* by hereditary right, and thoroughly *dux* by his military skill, but he could not yet claim the priestly qualities of the *sacerdos*.[107] He realized that in order to legitimize his reign, and to obtain this priestly quality, he would have to be formally crowned King of France. Unable to be crowned in the traditional place of coronation, the Cathedral of Rheims (because Rheims was in the hands of the League) he relied on several historical precedents and held the ceremony at Chartres. The week before the ceremony the royal ornaments forming part of the ceremony were gathered, and those that had been dispersed or destroyed were fabricated. Preparations were also made to replace those who traditionally participated in the ceremony, but were now loyal to the League, with persons who swore allegiance to Henry. Maria did not want to leave any avenues open for her opponents to attack her regency. With this in mind, she had to defend all aspects of Henry's assumption of power that could be open to criticism or questioning. It was therefore necessary to depict in monumental history paintings, for all to see, that Henry's right to rule came not only from the people of France, but divinely sanctified as well. This was as important for Maria as it was for Henry, and explains the presence of so many church dignitaries in both cycles.

The sketch for the *Coronation of Henry IV* (Fig. 16) shows Henry IV kneeling before the Bishop of Chartres, who stands on a raised dais and places the crown on Henry's head. Behind the King, two pages hold his large white mantle. Two cardinals stand behind the King and two secular dignitaries, holding the main-de-justice and

[105] Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* 132.
[106] The composition only survives in a sketch which probably dates from the first campaign of 1628.

scepter, stand at the right. To the Bishop's right, an acolyte supports the King's cloak while an angel above holds a chalice and is accompanied by a dove of the Holy Spirit. In the upper left-hand corner, a *putto* holds a sphere, while at the lower right sits a dog, likely a symbol of fidelity. It is not only through iconography or ideas that Rubens unites the two galleries, but through such small devices as this one, for two dogs may also be found in the foreground of Maria's coronation scene.

Julius Held notes that the subjects do not follow proper chronological sequence as the coronation took place three weeks before the capture of Paris. Held believes that in a preliminary stage of planning Henry's conversion to Catholicism was meant to adorn the large field on the west wall, followed by the *Coronation* and then the *Capture of Paris*. For a number of reasons the conversion scene was eliminated and replaced with the *Capture of Paris* and not the *Coronation*. The conversion scene, although a decisively important event in Henry's career, would not have been appropriate to include in the cycle. Maria wanted to stress the continuity and glory of the Bourbon line and to have represented Henry's conversion (the third since his birth) would have opened a political Pandora's box. Held asks why the conversion scene was not replaced by the *Coronation*, a compositionally similar motif. He correctly points out that "this would have created a rather awkward repetition of the picture of the *Coronation of Maria de' Medici*, which occupied exactly the same field on the west wall of the first gallery."[108] Considering that the emphasis was on Henry's military career, the *Capture of Paris* and the *Battle of Ivry* would make better pendants to the *Triumph* than would *Ivry* and the *Coronation*.

Union of Maria de' Medici and Henry IV

Neither visual nor documentary evidence exists to shed light on the mystery of the fourteenth to twentieth panels (Fig. 17); no one knows which scenes were to adorn those fields. Since these episodes were meant to represent the peaceful years of Henry's reign, it is possible that they were not of battles. It is conceivable that Henry's foreign and domestic policy was intended along with happy moments of his reign. Visual evidence does exists for the last field in the gallery, which was to be placed opposite the *Birth of*

[107] Buisseret 50.
[108] Julius Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* 134.

Henry in the first field on the east side. The sketch, traditionally called *The Marriage of Henry IV* (Fig. 2) but more accurately entitled *The Union of Maria de' Medici and Henry IV* (by Julius Held), depicts the couple walking together from right to left.[109] Their movement is towards a doorway leading to a hallway that connects the two galleries, thus encouraging the viewer to continue his historical reading in the Queen's gallery. The marriage is alluded to by the presence of a love god holding a burning torch, and the King's affectionate glance is suggestive of his spousal love. Held argues that "it is more likely that the picture indicates in general the great caesura that came in Henry's life with his marriage rather than the marriage itself."[110] Walking in a landscape Henry's left arm encircles Maria's waist while his right hand holds an olive branch, symbol of peace. Held believes that these attributes indicate the pacifying influence exercised on the King by his union with Maria de' Medici. This is all the more convincing when the viewer notices the opposite field showing Henry receiving the sword of war as a child — thus the viewer and the narrative would come 'full-circle.'

The pose given to Henry and Maria was an oft-used convention by Rubens. It finds similar treatment in his *Artist, Wife and Son in their Garden* (1631) as well as the *Conversatie à la mode* (1630-5). Neither of these pictures depicts a wedding, allowing us to assume that the *Union* panel was also not intended to depict a marriage. Since it is an allegorical work, one is left to question what date in Henry's life it represents. Two possibilities include it alluding to the year 1600, the year of their marriage, or 1610, the year of his assassination. Determining the actual date facilitates a reconstruction of the gallery. Arguments may be made for both. In looking at the Queen's gallery, we may note that Henry makes an appearance, and is alluded to, in many scenes taking place between 1600 and 1610. Extending the Henry cycle to include these later years would cause an unnecessary chronological overlap. If the *Union* was meant to represent the year 1600, then the fourteenth to twentieth panels would have to represent the years 1594 to 1600, the years in which he was still consolidating his power within France and beginning his

[109] Executed during the first campaign of 1628 and found in the Wallace Collection in London.
[110] Julius Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* 135.

diplomatic relations. It would have been possible to fill seven canvases with these events but we must ask if this was congruent with the Queen's objectives.

The Queen likely wanted Henry's foreign policy depicted in these missing fields. The King's political philosophy, which he was unable to see completed, would have been depicted on the east wall. Upon entering the Queen's gallery, the viewer would see the King's desires actualized through the body of Maria. Viewing these subjects would effectively reinforce the idea that the Queen Mother wanted to project: 1) that there was no break between the two reigns, 2) that she always worked on behalf of Henry IV, and 3) that she was successful. It thus seems most plausible that the missing fields would present Henry's foreign policy from 1594 until his death. It had to be explicitly shown that Henry followed a specific course of action that will be continued in Maria's gallery. The alleged panel does not necessarily represent one date or the other, it could simply allude to some time in between – such as Maria's elevation to member of the Council of State or the birth of the Dauphin.[111]

Existing subjects for the Henry gallery permit an authentic understanding of Maria's painted life. Having investigated how these episodes were meant to be viewed, it is instructive to investigate how the Medici cycle was to function.

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[111] Two sketches exist in the collection of the Princes of Liechtenstein which have sometimes been associated with the gallery of Henry IV. The first depicts *Henry IV Seizes the Opportunity to Conclude the Peace*, the other thought to represent *The Battle of Coutras*. These two sketches differ from the other sketches and canvases in their highly allegorical representation. Because of this type of representation Ingrid Jost finds no place for them within the gallery. More recently however, Julius Held has brought together all evidence for associating them with the never executed cycle, and arrived at the hypothesis that Rubens may have projected a series of tapestries for a room adjoining the gallery which would have continued the theme of homage to the deceased monarch. Julius S. Held, "On the Date and Function of Some Allegorical Sketches by Rubens," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 38 (1975): 218-233.

8. Overview of the Medici Gallery

Since its unveiling in 1625, the Medici gallery has been the topic of investigation by academics and art historians. The intervening 375 years have seen the proliferation of various interpretations. Present day scholarship provides the definitive subjects of all canvases. Also explained is the *raison d'etre* for the manner in which all subjects were painted, providing a valuable key to understand the Medici cycle. Before beginning our discussion on the unity of the Henry and Maria galleries, it is useful to review quickly the west gallery (Fig. 18).

The gallery can be divided into three sections. The first illustrates Maria's suitability to become a French queen. The second depicts the legitimate transference of power from Henry to Maria. The third concerns the continuation of policy between husband and wife, and the education of the Dauphin.

The first section is comprised of those subjects illustrating Maria's suitability as a French queen and regent. They include *The Fates Spin the Destiny of the Future Queen*, *The Birth of Maria de' Medici*, *The Education of the Princess*, *The Presentation of her Portrait to Henry IV*, *The Wedding by Proxy in Florence*, *The Disembarkation at Marseilles*, *The Marriage Consummated in Lyons*, and *The Birth of the Dauphin at Fontainbleau*. Because marriage had been Maria's path to power, she wanted it known that her union with Henry IV was legitimate in the eyes of the Church. Consequently, four out of the eight subjects have marriage as their main theme. Marriage would also be the path Maria followed in order to place her children on the thrones of Europe, in hopes of an extended period of peace. Understandably, marriage would be a theme found in several other commissions destined for the Luxembourg Palace. One example is the "Broomhall Commission," a series of paintings originally destined for the Cabinet Doré, one of Maria's ante rooms.[112] Almost all of the works in this commission had marriage as

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[112] The connection between the pictures now hanging at Broomhall, Fife, and those commissioned by Maria de' Medici was first made by Anthony Blunt in "A Series of Paintings Illustrating the History of the Medici Family Executed for Marie de Médicis," Burlington *Magazine* 109 (1967): 492-498 (pt. 1), 562-66 (pt. 2). Deborah Marrow subsequently wrote an article discussing the genesis of the commission in "Maria de' Medici and the Decorations of the Luxembourg Palace," *Burlington Magazine* 121 (1979): 783-791. Marie-Noelle Baudoin-Matuszek also discusses these paintings in her article "Un Palais pour une Reine Mère,"

their subject, either to remind the French that France was not without obligation to the Medici, or to depict an episode in which the settlement of conflict resulted in a marriage negotiation.[113]

Preceding the four marriage canvases are three subjects that depict Maria's suitability to wed the King of France. These include *The Fates Spin the Destiny of the Future Queen*, *The Birth of Maria de' Medici*, and *The Education of the Princess*. As discussed above, *The Fates* is an allegorical painting depicting the thread of life that is being woven by several goddesses. It is intimated that Maria's life will be the harbinger of peace, a desirable quality for the Queen of France and wife of Henry IV. It has also been mentioned how *The Birth* depicts the worldly appearance of the royal consort to Henry IV, predetermined on an astrological level. In *The Education* it is demonstrated that Maria was schooled in a manner deserving of both a princess and a prince, indicating that she possessed the proper qualities to marry into royalty and eventually assume the throne of France in the name of Henry IV. The last picture in this first division is *The Birth of the Dauphin*. This is an important subject, for it demonstrates Maria fulfilling her main function as consort to Henry IV – to provide an heir to the throne. Maria not only provided an heir to the throne but five other children, thus securing the continuation of the Bourbon line. With the birth of Louis XIII, Maria gained much prestige, not only in Henry's eyes, but also in those of the court and the populace. Although of foreign origin, the Medici princess excelled where Henry's previous wife failed. With the birth of Henry's first male heir, Maria was elevated in his estimation, and she became more involved in affairs of state. Thus the first eight scenes depict Maria as deserving of the power she would later assume, illustrated in subsequent scenes. She is shown spiritually and mystically prepared by Olympian deities, legally entitled to the crown through marriage, and worthy in actions to accept future responsibility. Thus the Queen Mother was shown to have met all the requirements of legality and legitimacy.

The second division includes those canvases that illustrate a legitimate transfer of power from Henry IV to Maria de' Medici and supported by the future King Louis XIII.

Marie de Médicis et le Palais du Luxembourg (Paris: Délégation à l'Action Artistique de la Ville de Paris, 1991) 170-223, in which she also discusses other works commissioned for the Luxembourg Palace.

These include *The Consignment of the Regency*, *The Coronation in Saint-Denis*, and the double composition of *The Death of Henry IV and the Proclamation of the Regency*. Rubens' mastery of art in the service of politics has transformed these subjects into a unified group that presents the legitimate transfer of power from Henry IV to Maria de' Medici. Besides depicting the legal transfer, Maria wanted to illustrate the idea that she never sought the Regency, but, instead, *was asked to take on this responsibility*. She wished to stress that she had no ulterior motive, but only wanted to serve two kings, and France herself – as best she could.

The Consignment of the Regency took place on March 20, 1610 to declare officially the conferring of the Regency on the Queen in case of the King's absence or demise. A solemn ceremony (as depicted in the canvas by Rubens) never occurred, but in the artists' capable hands, the event takes on interesting connotations. Rubens managed to create an image which would effectively reinforce the legitimacy of Maria's regency, remind the new King of his Mother's well-tempered reaction to his escapades, and remind the viewer that she did not actively pursue the reigns of government. By emulating well known emblems that appeared on coins beginning in 1603 (well before the assumption of the Regency) the artist accomplished this task. The symbols would be recognizable in courtly circles because courtiers were the owners and recipients of such commemorative coins. The picture (Fig. 19) depicts Henry IV in military armor handing the gold-lilied orb of French rule to Maria. Between them stands the Dauphin, who holds his mother's left hand and looks in her direction, with the scene depicted under a triumphal arch.[114] Two allegorical figures stand at Maria's right which, as Millen and Wolf argue, "stand for the wise precepts given Maria during 'the time when the late King began to have the Queen take part in the more important councils and negotiations of the government of this state'."[115] We may remember that Maria was asked to assume the Regency when Henry IV was preparing to wage war on to the lands of the united duchies of Cleve, Berg and Jülich, occupied by the Catholic Imperial Austrian forces on behalf of

[113] Marrow, "Maria de' Medici and the Decorations of the Luxe..bourg Palace" 784.
[114] The triumphal arch is one of Henry IV's emblems and used elsewhere in the cycle to physically, and conceptually, join the two galleries.
[115] Millen and Wolf 99.

the Protestant claimants. This planned military action is alluded to through Henry's military dress, and the detail of the spurs on his ankles, as if he were about to jump on his horse and ride off to battle.

The composition is derived from two sets of medals, one from the year 1603 (re-minted with several changes in 1604, Figs. 20 – 21), and others dating from 1610 (Fig. 22) and 1611 (Fig. 23), the first years of Maria's regency. The medal of 1603 was cast to commemorate Henry's gift to Maria of a seat on the Council of State. On one side is a double portrait of Henry and Maria while the obverse depicts three figures within the motto PROPAGO IMPERI, referring to the perpetuation of the reign or of the sovereignty, state, or power. The three figures are Mars (Henry), Minerva (Maria) and an infant *Amor* (Louis XIII). Mars-Henry, dressed in classical battle armor, holds Minerva-Maria's outstretched right hand in a sign of good faith. Minerva holds a shield behind her back in a sign of good will and reconciliation. Their hands join over the head of the infant *Amor* who wears a helmet and treads on a dolphin, symbol of the Dauphin, while an eagle sweeps down with a royal crown. The coin of 1604 is similar to this one, except that the features of the three protagonists are more recognizably those of the royal family. The medals of 1610-11 differ in both what they depict and symbolize. These later coins contain the motto ORIENS AUGUSTI MINERVA TUTRICE meaning "The king grown under the guidance of Minerva". Millen and Wolf describe the scene as illustrating

> a nude Apollo standing solidly on his feet with legs spread apart, holding in his left hand a globe adorned with three lilies and surmounted by a cross. He raises his right hand toward the upper part as if in the act of making some important declaration (*protestation*), and has his head surrounded by light. Before him stands Minerva {seated in the variant}, who in her right hand holds an olive branch, symbol of Peace, and in her left a sheaf of lightning to be put to use if needed (De Bie).[116]

From this image, Rubens took the stance and figure for Louis, who, in the painting, is clutching his mother's hand rather than the orb. Rubens' final choice reinforces the idea that Maria was holding the orb of power – of government – on behalf of her son, and with his consent. Because Louis is holding his mother's hand in the final picture, it can safely

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[116] Millen and Wolf 102.

be interpreted as the Dauphin supporting the transfer of power and giving his blessing to the event — something Maria needed to popularize as historical fact.[117] By presenting a scene that illustrates the smooth transfer of power from king to queen, with the support of the Dauphin, Millen and Wolf are correct in stating that this picture can be considered "an outright political challenge to those who contested the Queen's authority."[118]

The Coronation in Saint-Denis is the first of the three large canvases at the north end of the gallery that provides a narrative and aesthetic focus for the entire palace. It reinforces the idea that Maria tentatively accepted the crown of France with the full authority of both temporal and spiritual powers. Analyzing the context closer, one can understand why Maria reinterpreted events, presenting them as actuality. Rubens was not free to paint a coronation scene according to set types, but had to consult both written documents and pictorial works that were made of the event. Additionally, the Queen Mother gave Rubens specific instructions as to what to include in the painting. *The Coronation* depicts the legitimization of Maria's rule by temporal and spiritual powers. It would therefore have to be shown that her royal anointment had the full approval of the King, the Lord, and certain individuals and families who had threatened her position, or might still do so. For this reason, Maria asked to include several of these elements in the painting.

First, Maria de' Medici wanted all the Estates included and consenting in the *Coronation in Saint-Denis*. Second, she wanted her allies – past and present – to be thanked for their loyalty. Third, she wished that her enemies and challengers to the throne be shown to have participated in the ceremony, by extension having approved of the coronation and the authority it granted. Fourth, Maria wanted representatives of the Church – bishops, archbishops, cardinals and the pontifical representative – to be shown taking an active part in the ceremony so as to emphasize that the act of coronation was a reflection of divine will.[119]

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[117] Louis gave a short speech beseeching his mother to take the reigns of government at the official ceremony in the Parlement when the Regency was officially given to Maria.
[118] Millen and Wolf 106.
[119] Millen and Wolf 112.

Maria eliminated personalities who were not relevant to her purposes in 1622, and added or accentuated the roles played by others. The work was a reflection of the political situation of the Dowager Queen of 1622 (and not that of the Queen-Regent of 1610). One particularly interesting example is the two men in the middle of the composition, one with his back turned towards us, the other looking out at the viewer. These two men are the Vendôme brothers, Duke César de Vendôme, bearing the scepter, and the Chevalier Alexandre de Vendôme, Grand Prior of France in the Order of Malta, holding the *main de justice*. They were not only Henry's most prominent bastards, but also two of Maria's most tiresome enemies. Because of their relation to the royal family, they took part in the coronation ceremony (though they were sixteen and twelve years old, respectively.) What is interesting is the implication held by these two figures in their treatment by Rubens. Rubens did not paint them as they were in 1610 *but as the grown men they were when the picture was painted*. Portraying them as willing, adult participants in the ceremony – who understand the implications of their actions – makes them consent to Maria's position and their own waiver of any claim to the throne are recorded for all to read.[120]

Rubens again uses his artistic mastery to manipulate the facts, with the aim of ameliorating the Queen's image, in changing the pose of Louis XIII, more than any other, before settling on the one finally executed. In the first preparatory sketch (*modello*) Louis is seen placing a supporting hand under his mother's left elbow. In the second sketch Louis is shown reaching up to her crown. If the latter power were to have been executed, the gesture could be interpreted as grasping for the crown, or helping to crown. In the final painting, Louis' stance is not one of support or grabbing, but of urging his mother to accept the crown. This reflects the political ideal that Maria wanted to propagate – that she was crowned in her own right for her own attributes, with the full consent of both father and son knowing that she would always rule in their name.

Similarly, it was for this reason that such a large emphasis was put on the ecclesiastical presence in the ceremony. It was stated in Rubens' instructions for the

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[120] Although Maria found it important for these two figures to be permanent fixtures in her semi-private residence either painter or patron decided to paint one of the brothers, Alexander, in a rear view, so as to spare Maria the pain of seeing this his face every time she passed through her gallery.

creation of this scene, that the entire ceremony should be omitted and only the moment when Cardinal de Joyeuse placed the crown on the Queen's head be shown. Thus, it was not the pomp and splendor which was intended to be emphasized, but the one moment which mattered in the eyes of God, France, and any pretenders to the throne. Rubens painstakingly reproduced a likeness of the officiating Cardinal – again for political reasons. One of the potential threats to Maria's rule and accession of power was the claim that Henry's divorce from his first wife was not legitimate. The officiating Cardinal, François-Henri de Joyeuse, was one of those who recommended the dissolution of Henry's marriage to Marguerite de Valois, and is thus proof of Henry's subsequent marriage to the Medici princess. This interpretation deserves serious consideration when it is remembered that the ex-queen Marguerite took part in the coronation – presented at the left, and therefore fully supportive of it.

The third scene depicting the legitimate transference of power is *The Death of Henry IV and the Proclamation of the Regency* (Fig. 24), a double composition found at the north end of the gallery. It illustrates the apotheosis of Henry IV and the assumption of the Regency by Maria de' Medici. As Maria sits enthroned and surrounded by Solomonic columns, she is being offered the lillied orb of power by a personification of France herself. Surrounding her throne are the princes and nobles of France beseeching her to accept what is being offered. Maria makes no gesture for the orb while she sits in her widow's garb. Maria's gesture illustrates that she made no claim to the throne, but reluctantly agreed, at the insistence of the nobles and princes, after power was legitimately transferred to her in the previous two paintings. Additionally, other aspects of this picture's iconography connects the two galleries, and will be discussed below, particularly the arch behind Maria that refers to Henry IV. *The Death of Henry IV and the Proclamation of the Regency* further acts to legitimize Maria's reign by connecting it with the King's gallery and reign.

The third section of the Medici gallery is composed of canvases illustrating the Queen Mother's accomplishment during her reign, and the more recent events – notably the fight between mother and son. Included in this group is the third of the long canvases at the northern end of the gallery known as *The Council of the Gods*. The subject had

been wrongly identified until Jacques Thuillier discovered a manuscript showing it to be the *Consert des dieux pour les Mariages réciproques de la France et d'Espagne.*[121] The following canvas is entitled *The Regent Militant: The Victory at Jülich*, previously discussed as the conclusion to a battle set in motion by Henry IV, and cut short by his unexpected assassination but completed by Maria de' Medici. The next picture is *The Exchange of the Princesses at the Spanish Border*, making reference to Maria's greatest diplomatic coup. It must be remembered that Henry IV, who did not live to see it completed, had previously envisaged this project. In presenting this as a *fait accomplit* Maria would be reminding the viewer that not only did she complete Henry IV's military battles, but, as well, his desire to see a marriage between the two royal houses setting the stage for a pan-European peace. Maria originally wanted the double marriages to occupy four spaces, but because of spatial requirements, and Rubens' own suggestion, they were cut down to two.

The next scene in the cycle is known as *The Felicity of the Regency* and was a last minute replacement for another subject known as *The Expulsion From Paris*. The *Felicity* depicts the manner in which France prospered during Maria's reign due to her wise counsel and good government – proof positive that Henry IV had made a wise decision in allowing her to carry on in his name. Next in the series is the canvas known as *Louis XIII Comes of Age*, celebrating Louis XIII's thirteenth birthday, the moment he attained his majority, and could officially, and legally, assume the throne. Although Maria attempted to hand over the rudder of the ship of state (as depicted), Louis insisted that his mother continue in her present capacity because of the magnificent job she had done up until this point. These five panels concern events that were conceived by Henry IV and may, therefore, be perceived as an extension of his reign. The two scenes celebrating the double royal marriage represent a project originally envisioned by the King – as was the completion of the Jülich campaign. *The Felicity* and *Louis XIII Comes of Age* also relate to the reign of Henry IV but in a different manner. Instead of illustrating policies originally conceived, these canvases present moments in the history of France that Henry

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[121] Jacques Thuillier, "La 'Galerie de Médicis' de Rubens et sa genèse: un document inédit," *Revue de l'Art* 4 (1969): 60. For a historiography on various interpretations of this canvas consult Millen and Wolf 139.

IV intended, especially as a result of his union with Maria de' Medici. Henry knew that by entrusting the Regency to his wife he would not only ensure the "felicity" of the realm, but also of a continuation of his progeny, Louis XIII, upon attainment of the child's majority. In viewing the Henry gallery first, the spectator would fully grasp Maria's intentions in presenting her own life.

The last five panels make reference to the fight and reconciliation between mother and son; they continue to provoke debate among Rubens scholars as to the original, intended, meaning. The canvases are *The Flight from Blois*, *The Negotiations at Angoulême*, *The Queen Opts for Security*, *The Reconciliation after the Connétable's Death*, and *Time Unveils Truth*. Maria wished to illustrate *her* version of history, and present both herself and Louis XIII in the best possible manner. Maria felt that although recent events had almost precipitated a civil war between mother and son, they could still be used to strengthen her defense. In previous scenes, Maria is seen executing a policy – both foreign and domestic – initiated by Henry IV. These last scenes indicate that Maria followed his policy even in the face of adversity despite bringing France to the edge of war. These canvases elucidate the Queen Mother's actions by tying her actions to the will of the late king, and arguing that the young king was under the influence of high-placed courtiers. Once the main intriguer, the Connétable, illustrated as a many-headed monster; died, the path to peace and familial reconciliation was once again open.[122] Maria could then reclaim her rightful place alongside Louis as illustrated in *The Return of the Mother to her Son*.[123] By including these scenes, Maria follows the example of Caterina de' Medici. One of the main components of Caterina's imagery was that of illustrating her place as an integral component in the education of the Dauphin. In the aforementioned

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[122] Millen and Wolf make a good argument that the "scaly fire-breathing monster" not only represents Luynes, but all the enemies of the Dowager Queen and, hence, of France itself. Millen and Wolf 207.

[123] Millen and Wolf write that "The subject of this painting was among those listed as to be kept in reserve until it was clear which way the windswould blow. With good reason. Two years after the truce at Angers this picture was still being though of as *The Full Reconciliation with the Son After the Death of the Connetable*... It was an unabashed effort, therefore, to put all the blame on an enemy who, though heavy with guilt and himself a thorough diabolus ex machina, was nonetheless dead, disdained, disclaimed... But in Maria's eyes he was symbol and summation of all the wrongs inflicted on her and, moreover, a very convenient friendless corpse on whom to saddle all the blame for the animosity her own son had shown her. Luynes's death did in fact improve her situation and take the edge off Louis's capacity to wound her." Millen and Wolf 205.

canvases, Maria is clearly instrumental in the education of a political ideology to her son. In the final panel, mother and son are reconciled; indicating that Louis has come to the realization that his mother followed a policy with his (and France's) best interests in mind. Thus, Maria was to play a part in Louis' education – in the art of politics.

9. The Unity of Henry and Maria's Galleries

When considered together, the Henry and Maria cycles present the legitimization of Maria's regency. This is achieved by illustrating the Queen Mother as having directed the Regency in the name of Henry IV and Louis XIII. Rubens contributes to this idea in numerous ways. First, subject matter was harmonized. The viewer would observe in Henry's gallery the legitimate manner in which he rose to power and the undeniable authority on which the Bourbon dynasty now ruled. It would have been clear that the deceased king possessed the qualities required of the ideal prince and ruled both himself and the state accordingly. Depicted would be the political philosophy, both foreign and domestic, with which he guided his reign. Encouraged by the physical reality of the architectural surroundings, the viewer would then move into the Queen's gallery. There he would first see Maria's suitability to become a French queen and the legitimate manner in which she assumed this position after the assassination of her consort. With this in mind, the principal events of Maria's regency would be viewed, which were simply a continuation of policy established by Henry IV or a completion of projects he was unable to see through to the end. By the policies she followed, the viewer would begin to understand that Maria was ruling in the name of her husband. This same idea is also expressed in the pervasive presence of Henry IV in the Medici gallery, with his image, or presence, seen in nine of the twenty-one narratives.[124]

Further to harmonizing subject matter between the two galleries, Rubens used his talents as scholar and antiquarian to unite the vast project using classical iconography. Shaw Smith explores this idea in an article titled "Rubens and the *Grand Camée de France*: The *Consecratio* in the Medici Galleries of the Luxembourg Palace."

Shaw Smith and the *Consecratio*

The two sets of triads, dominating the ends of each gallery, unite the forty-eight monumental scenes depicting the life of the King and Queen of France. Shaw Smith

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[124] 1) *The Birth of Maria de' Medici*, 2) *The Presentation of Her Portrait to Henry IV*, 3) *The Wedding by Proxy in Florence*, 4) *The Marriage Consummated in Lyons*, 5) *The Birth of the Dauphin at Fontainbleau*, 6) *The Consignment of the Regency*, 7) *The Coronation in Saint-Denis*, 8) *The Death of Henry IV and the Proclamation of the Regency*, and 9) *The Regent Militant: The Victory at Jülich*.

argues that "Rubens based the complete conceptual structure of the project on the ancient *Consecratio*, an argument which does not simply uncover yet another 'antique source', but one which reunites both galleries for the first time."[125] This idea finds expression in the triads at the end of each gallery. Smith sees the Medici gallery as divisible into three parts, each with its own component of the narrative: the west wall, north wall, and east wall. The west wall is dedicated to Maria's preparations for her divinely appointed ruling — her ascendancy to the throne of France. The last field on the west wall, the first of the large canvases making up the triad, is the *Coronation in Saint-Denis*, which is a culmination of Maria's heavenly assisted preparations. The large canvas occupying the north wall contains a double composition of the *Apotheosis of Henry IV and the Ascendancy of Maria*. On the left is Henry, after his assassination, raised heavenwards by Jupiter and Time to join the Zodiac. On the right is the Ascendancy of Maria, at the moment when she accepts the Regency, represented by the Rudder of the Ship of State and the Orb of Government. Her throne is surrounded by twisted, Solomonic columns, and is placed before a festive Triumphal Arch. Smith argues that the first scene on the east wall, the *Council of the Gods* "displays the results of the ascendancy of the Daughter of Peace"[126] and the rest of the scenes on that wall celebrate Maria's 'celestial peace.' Smith makes a distinction between the celestial peace brought by Maria and the earthly one brought by Henry IV.

Maria's peace was part of a divinely ordained plan, whereas Henry's design was of an earthly nature, coming from his own desire to see the unification of France. It is, therefore, logical to view the east wall of the Queen's gallery and the west wall of the King's as analogous, both being preparations for the true monarchy. The former prepares the princess for her role as Queen of Peace and culminates in her Coronation. The latter contains scenes that pave the way for the unification of France and ends in the most decisive battle — the *Battle of Ivry* — allowing Henry to rule over a united France.

A direct relationship exists between the two scenes on the end wall of each gallery: the *Triumph of Henry IV* and the *Apotheosis and Ascendancy*. The triumphal arch

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[125] Shaw Smith 128.

that occupies a prominent place in each composition is an important symbol connecting husband and wife. The arch was one of the late Henry's emblems associated with the motto AGGREDIAR ET INGREDIAR (I shall attack and I shall enter) and often associated to his conquest of Paris in 1594.[127] According to Millen and Wolf "the connection with an emblem associated with such a decisive moment in her husband's career constitutes a further assertion of her right, handed on from his right and through his specific decree, to the regency being offered her in this scene."[128] Shaw Smith believes a further explanation for the presence of the arches exists:

> the conflation of an Earthly Triumph with an Apotheosis, monumentally projected at the North Ends of wings of the Luxembourg, has its origins in antiquity – an important source for Rubens throughout his career. In ancient art and literature, well-known to Rubens from his Italian trip, the combination of a Triumph with an Apotheosis yields a new form: a *Consecratio* – or consecration of the ruling class. In this affirmation of Divine Right, Henry's Earthly Triumphs and Apotheosis prepare and promote the *Consecratio* of Marie's Reign.[129]

This conceptual unity is reinforced by the physical reality of the Luxembourg palace (Fig. 25). Below the arch, towards which Henry's Triumph is progressing, is a door that leads to an arcade joining the two galleries. The viewer would emerge through a door located below the arch found in the Ascendancy. Thus the viewer walking from the *Triumph* of Henry to his *Apotheosis* is confronted with its effect: the *Consecratio* of Maria's reign. Smith explains that "the *Consecratio*, a combination of the Triumph and the Apotheosis, was a significant form in antiquity to legitimize the divine right of the ruling house."[130] This is an appropriate manner in which to unite the two cycles since one of Maria's objectives, in the construction and decoration of the Luxembourg, was to advertise the legitimacy of her rule. Thus the triads at the end of each gallery are complementary, one

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[126] Shaw Smith 130.
[127] Millen and Wolf 132.
[128] Millen and Wolf 132.
[129] Shaw Smith 133. The artist would have been aware of the notion of the *Consecratio* for it was the subject of two great cameos which Rubens knew through his correspondence with Peiresc. The first is the *Gemma Tiberiana*, which represents the glorification of Germanicus, and was discovered by Peiresc in the Treasury of the Sainte Chapelle in 1620. Rubens made a copy of it when in Paris in 1622. Rubens had already made a copy of the *Gemma Augustea* before October 27, 1621. Wolfgang Stechow, *Rubens and the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge, Ma: Published for Oberlin College by Harvard University Press, 1968) 16-20.

being the preparation for the one true ruler, the other the fulfillment of the promised prophesy.

Because a multi faceted approach to the Rubens commissions is taken, there are many other ways that the two galleries are united. The two cycles are not only connected by a continuation of narrative, but through a number of conceptual motifs as well. One of these is the idea that Maria and Henry, together, are the perfect ruler. Each ruler would bring their specific qualities to the throne; Henry would bring heroic imagery rooted in the terrestrial world while Maria would bring traditional female capabilities. These include marriage (both her own and her children's') and solidifying the continuation of the Bourbon dynasty by being a fertile woman. While Henry's triumph is an earthly one, Maria's is seen to be rooted in the celestial, attested to by the numerous gods and goddesses found throughout her cycle, not as decoration but as key figures. Many more examples of how the two galleries are united may be put forth, but they go beyond the scope of this paper, and are a valid topic for future research.

[130] Shaw Smith 133.

10. Rubens, the French Court, and his Frustrations Over the Henry IV Series

It was Rubens' desire, in his capacities of artist and diplomat, to see the completion of both Luxembourg cycles. Had they been executed, one of the greatest propaganda tools in the history of art and politics would have been in existence. The failure to execute the second half of the commission cannot be placed on Rubens' shoulders but on the political machinations of Cardinal Richelieu.

Julius Held has pointed out that, although the contract stipulated that after the completion of the first twelve pictures for Maria's gallery Rubens must submit sketches for the first twelve pictures of Henry's gallery, "at no time while engaged on the cycle for the first gallery did Rubens make any sketches for the second."[131] As told by Rubens in a letter to Peiresc, following the reception to the party of the marriage by proxy of Henrietta-Maria to Charles I (May 1625), the second gallery delays began as soon as the first was delivered:

> But Monsignor the Cardinal de Richelieu, although I have given him a concise program in writing, is so occupied with the government of the state that he has not had time to look at it even once. I have therefore resolved that, as soon as I succeed in obtaining my settlement, I will depart immediately, and leave it to him and to M. De St. Ambroise to send me their decisions at their leisure, even though confused and topsy-turvy, according to their method, and perhaps a year from now, in Antwerp. In short, I am tired of this Court, and unless they give me prompt satisfaction, comparable to the punctuality I have shown in the service of the Queen Mother, it may be (this is said in confidence, *entre nous*) that I will not readily return...[132]

In a letter to Valavez in December of 1625, Rubens complained that he still had not heard any word from Saint-Ambroise[133] and by February 12, he had heard the rumor

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[131] Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* 123.
[132] Letter dated Paris, May 13, 1625. Magurn 110.
[133] "There must be a new attitude at the Court with regard to me, for the Abbé de St. Ambroise has never written to me since my departure, nor has he even answered the cordial letter I sent him last month. I can augur nothing else from his silence than some change of mind, which affects me little; and to tell you the truth, in confidence, the whole thing will not cost me a second letter. But if you can discreetly obtain information from some person who is able to furnish it, you will do me a great favor. For the rest, when I consider the trips I have made to Paris, and the time I have spent there, without any special recompense, I find that the work for the Queen Mother has been very unprofitable for me, unless I take into account the generosity of the Duke of Buckingham on this occasion." Magurn 121-122.

that the commission was to be given to an Italian. Although the court assuaged Rubens' fears, the rumors were well founded.[134] As early as 1623, Richelieu made inquiries as to the possibility of retaining Guido Reni for the commission, and in 1629 he attempted to convince the Queen Mother to employ the Cavalier d'Arpino in Rubens' stead. It must be remembered that in 1629 Rubens was in Madrid preparing for a diplomatic mission to England in order to work out a peace agreement between these two countries. Since this mission was in direct opposition to Richelieu's political plans and convictions, it is one more reason why he should wish to sabotage the projected cycle.

Rubens and his French correspondents must have finally come to some agreement because on January 27, 1628 Rubens wrote to Pierre Dupuy that he had started the designs for the Henry gallery.[135] Thus, the first work we have for the Henry gallery dates between January 27, 1628 and the end of August when Rubens left for Madrid. In 1628 the artist worked up some of his early thoughts for the gallery in a series of sketches, which were probably meant to be sent to Paris for inspection and approval. The second phase of work on the Henry gallery dates from his return from England, in the spring of 1630. During this second campaign he reworked several compositions and began to execute the large panels.

The history (or lack thereof) of the Henry gallery can only be explained in relation to French politics, and specifically to the Cardinal Richelieu. During the execution of the first gallery, Cardinal Richelieu was still rising to power under the auspices of the Queen Mother, whose policies he had to defend. One of these policies was to maintain the peaceful relations with Spain established by Henry IV. Otto Georg von Simson argues that Cardinal Richelieu *allowed* Maria to espouse her political ideology in and through the Medici gallery for a number of reasons. First, it was good publicity for her and her cause and "to have her thus extolled as the Mother of France, in the emphatic vision of Rubens which often blended the features of the Queen with those of the blessed Virgin,

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[134] See Thuillier and Foucart 45-6, 59 (n. 45), 64 (n. 158), 129-130, 158. Also see Marrow, *The Art Patronage of Maria de' Medici* 45-46.
[135] "I have now begun the designs for the other Gallery..." Magurn 234.

served well the man who had risen in her shadow."[136] Second, the Medici gallery was good publicity abroad in that it conveyed the peaceful designs of French politics, specifically towards Spain. As Simson notes "one can hardly think of a more impressive (and less costly) way of convincing foreign observers that the pro-Spanish faction at Court was by no means dead than this glorification of Marie de' Medici's reign by an artist known to be in the service of Spain."[137] Third, "the success of any 'apology' for the Queen depended on her advocate's ability to prove that she had consistently pursued the traditional policies of France, and that in all upheavals this policy had neither required nor undergone any modifications, and that Marie's estrangement from her son was nothing but the work of contemptible intriguers."[138] As discussed above, this was to be a unifying theme between the two galleries.

After Richelieu consolidated his own power, beginning in 1624 with his appointment as Secretary of State for Commerce and Marine, and Chief of the Royal Council, and culminating four years later with the creation of the title of First Minister for his position, he was able to put his plans for France into action. Richelieu had wanted to counter Habsburg hegemony in Europe, which threatened French independence, and to unify France under the leadership of the divinely ordained king. Having come into his own power and seeing how successfully the Medici gallery was executed by Rubens, Richelieu realized that he could not permit the completion of the Henry gallery which would have gone counter to his political ideals. Richelieu was no longer asking for forgiveness and was no longer biding his time. To allow Rubens — known to be in the service of Spain, friend to the Queen Mother, active proponent of a peaceful resolution of European conflict — to execute a large political cycle glorifying a queen who was no longer useful to him and policies to which he no longer adhered was now unacceptable.

Knowing that Rubens' services would be of use to him only until he was able to consolidate personal and national power, Richelieu, early on, made certain that he could

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[136] Simson, *Richelieu and Rubens* 430.
[137] Simson, *Richelieu and Rubens* 431.
[138] Simson, *Richelieu and Rubens* 432.

sabotage the execution of the Luxembourg galleries.[139] As previously mentioned, as far back as 1623 Richelieu wanted to replace Rubens, but as Thuillier and Foucart note "it was only after 1625 that Richelieu seems to have decided definitely to remove Rubens from the scene, and even then he relied on temporizing more than on outright refusal."[140] In order to minimize the appearance that Richelieu was stalling the execution of the gallery he ordered two pictures from the artist, to be painted in Antwerp. At first, this did not fool the painter:

> I am astonished by what you write me — that the Cardinal wishes to have two pictures by my hand. This is not at all in accordance with the report which the Ambassador of Flanders sends me. He says that the paintings of the second gallery of the Queen are to be given to an Italian painter, notwithstanding the contract with me. It is true that he says he has only heard this, but does not know it for certain. He has been told, however, that it is a certainty, and he supposes it was done with my consent. But I believe that if this were the case, you would know it, and would have informed me.[141]

But a week later he is apt to believe the web of lies and secrecy:

> I have received your most welcome letter of the 13th of this month, along with that of the Abbé de St. Ambroise, who shows himself courteous, as is his custom, and as well disposed toward me as ever. The purpose of his letter is to inform me that Monsignor the Cardinal wishes to have two pictures by my hand for his collection, just as you had written me in your last letter. As for the Gallery, the Abbé tells me that the Queen Mother offers the excuse that she has had until now neither time nor opportunity to think about the subjects. All that will be done in due time, since the Gallery is still but little advanced. *I am thus forced to believe there is no truth in what the Ambassador of Flanders wrote me on this matter*, which I told you in my previous letter.[142]

The Queen decided to go ahead with Rubens, since he began work on the sketches in January 1628. Although work on the project was interrupted by his sojourn in Madrid, he wrote a letter to Peiresc, in which he mentions his "long service to the Queen Mother"[143]

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[139] Deborah Marrow has shown that Maria de' Medici kept tight control over her artistic commissions. If this was indeed the case then it must be investigated exactly how Richelieu was involved with the execution of the galleries. This will be a topic of future research.
[140] Thuillier and Foucart, *Rubens' Life of Maria de' Medici* 59 (n. 45).
[141] Letter to Valavez dated February 12, 1626. Magurn 127.
[142] Letter to Valavez dated February 20, 1626. Magurn 130.
[143] Letter to Peiresc dated December 2, 1628. Magurn 292.

indicating that he had no doubts that he would still execute the programme for the King's gallery.[144] Following his stay in Spain (where he was knighted by King Philip IV), Rubens traveled to London with the mission to prepare a peace treaty between Spain and England, to be signed by official diplomats after the establishment of embassies in the two capitals. Whereas previously Rubens' diplomatic activity was mostly covert, he was now on the international stage of European politics — in Richelieu's eyes his activities were a slap in the face to France and to himself. Richelieu was fully aware of Rubens' activities in London and even sent agents there to counteract Rubens' negotiations. Although Rubens' activities were inexcusable in Richelieu's eyes, the Cardinal was too much of a "gentleman" to openly call the contract off; he simply bided his time and made the experience a regrettable one for the artist.[145] This was achieved by changing the dimensions of the required paintings. Rubens complained in a letter to Pierre Dupuy in October 1630, having returned from a successful mission in England six months previously:

> As for M. De St. Ambroise... I was not aware there was any difference between us, other than some slight misunderstanding regarding the measurements and proportions of the Gallery of Henry the Great. I beg you to consider whether there is any justification on my side; I shall submit entirely to your judgment. They have sent me from the beginning the measurements of all the pictures, and according to his custom, M. l'Abbé has accompanied them most punctually with his letters. And I, acting under his orders have made considerable progress on some of the largest and most important pieces, like the "Triumph of the King" for the rear of the gallery. Now the Abbé de St. Ambroise himself takes two feet from the height of the pictures, and at the same time he heightens the frames of the doors and portals, so they will in some places cut through the pictures. Thus, without remedy, I am forced to mutilate, spoil, and change almost everything I have done. I confess that I felt this keenly, and that I complained to M. l'Abbé (but to no one else) begging him to grant me half a foot, so that I need not cut off the head of the King seated on his triumphal chariot, and also pointing out the inconvenience of an increase in the height of the doors. I said frankly that so many obstacles at the beginning of this work seemed to me a bad omen for its success, that I found my courage cast down, and to tell the truth, felt considerable

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[144] Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens* 123.
[145] For a full account of Rubens' diplomatic activities consult Emile Cammaerts, *Rubens: Painter and Diplomat* (London: Faber and Faber, 1932) especially chapters five and six.

> displeasure by these innovations and changes which hurt not only me but the work itself, and will greatly diminish its splendor and distinction. If they had been ordered at the beginning, one could have made a virtue out of necessity; nevertheless, I am prepared to do everything possible to please M. l'Abbé and to serve him, and I beg you to favor me with your support.

We know that Rubens stopped working on the paintings soon afterwards (by November or December), in part because he had not received a satisfactory answer from Paris, and in part because of his impending marriage to Hélène Fourment. Perhaps work on the cycle would have been resumed at a later date had he received encouragement from Maria's household, but the events of late 1630 and 1631 made this an impossibility. On November 10, 1630, in what has gone down in history as 'the day of the Dupes', Maria de' Medici appealed to the King to dismiss Richelieu who had just returned from an anti-Spanish campaign in northern Italy. Richelieu was not trusted by Louis XIII but he also did not trust his mother and wanted to assert his independence from her. Louis saw Richelieu as the only one who could liberate him from his mother's domination. After a day of suspense, the King decided to support the Cardinal and thereafter did not waver in his allegiance. Maria de' Medici fled to the Spanish Netherlands, with the King's brother Gaston d'Orléans, whose court at Brussels had become a quasi-refuge for those opposing Richelieu. Maria would never again be reunited with her son and would die an old, forgotten woman in Rubens's old house at Cologne on July 3, 1642. Because ownership of the Luxembourg palace was still in Maria's name, there was no incentive to continue the decorative programme and it was eventually forgotten. From a surviving letter, we have Rubens' thoughts on the inability to complete the series:

> I am very glad that a dispute with the Abbé de St. Ambroise concerning the measurements of the pictures kept me in suspense for more than four months, during which I could not lay hands to the work. It seems that some good genius has prevented me from embarking upon it any further. I certainly consider all I have done as labor entirely wasted, for it is to be feared that so eminent a person is not confined only to be release d again, and the example of her previous escape will cause such precautions *in posterum* that one may not hope it will happen again. To be sure, all courts

are subject to a great variety of hazards, but the Court of France more than all the others.[146]

[146] Letter to Pierre Dupuy dated March 27, 1631. Magurn 372.

11. Concluding Remarks

Had Louis XIII sided with his mother on the Day of the Dupes a different Europe would have emerged during the second half of the seventeenth century. This scenario would have allowed for the completion of Rubens' gallery of Henry IV and the remaining decorations intended for the Luxembourg Palace. Consequently, the Luxembourg would today be studied as another baroque example of an integrated environment, or, '*un bel composto*.' Being an artist who set styles and worked on the grandest of scales, Rubens was well acquainted with this idea and applied it to many other projects. Examples include such early altarpieces of *The Raising of the Cross* and *The Descent from the Cross* and later works including the ceiling of the Jesuit Church in Antwerp and the ceiling of the Banqueting House for King Charles I. These projects resulted in an integrated environment but none were designed on such a grandiose scale as the Luxembourg project.

Rubens, in accepting Maria de' Medici's commission, faced challenges different from his other projects. This time the artist had to unite two physically distinct galleries *and* harmonize subject matter within its physical environs. To seamlessly blend two reigns, a host of political ideologies, recent events with a distant past, and contributions by various individuals, was not an easy task. It has long been considered one of the great misfortunes of the history of art that Rubens did not have the chance to present his solutions to these problems. This thesis demonstrates that although the second phase of the project, Henry's cycle, was left incomplete, enough visual and documentary evidence exists to allow an understanding of Rubens' proposed solution. The preliminary steps have been taken in Rubens scholarship concerning the Luxembourg commission to allow future studies to appear on the subject.

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13. Figures

Figure 1) Birth of Henry of Navarre

Figure 2) Union of Maria de Medici and Henry IV

Figure 3) Reconciliation of King Henri III and Henry of Navarre

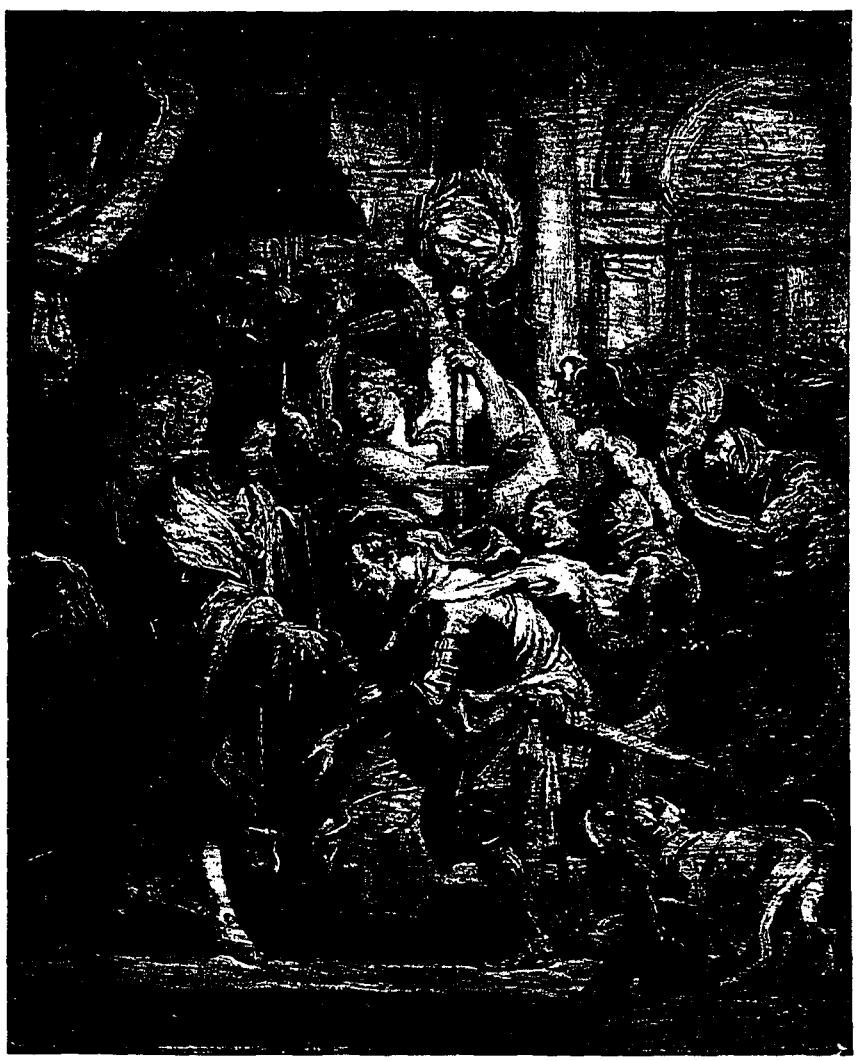


Figure 4) The Triumph of Truth (detail)

Figure 5) Siege of a Town in Normandy

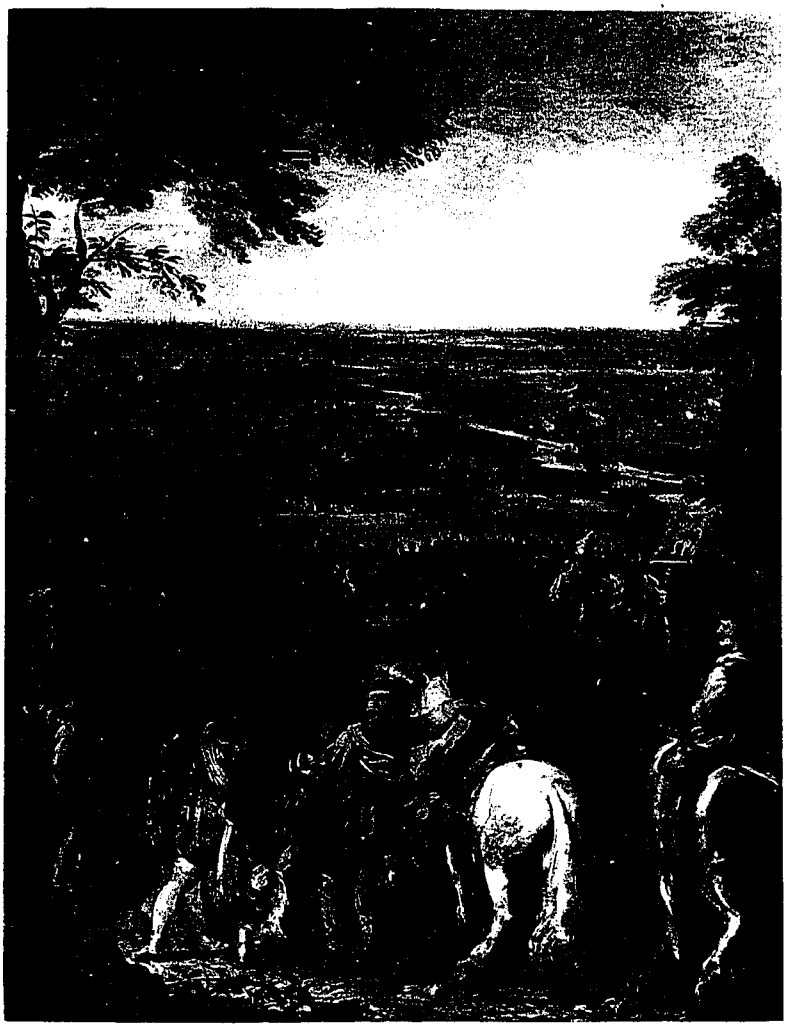


Figure 6) The Battle of Arques

Figure 7) Henry IV Outside of Paris

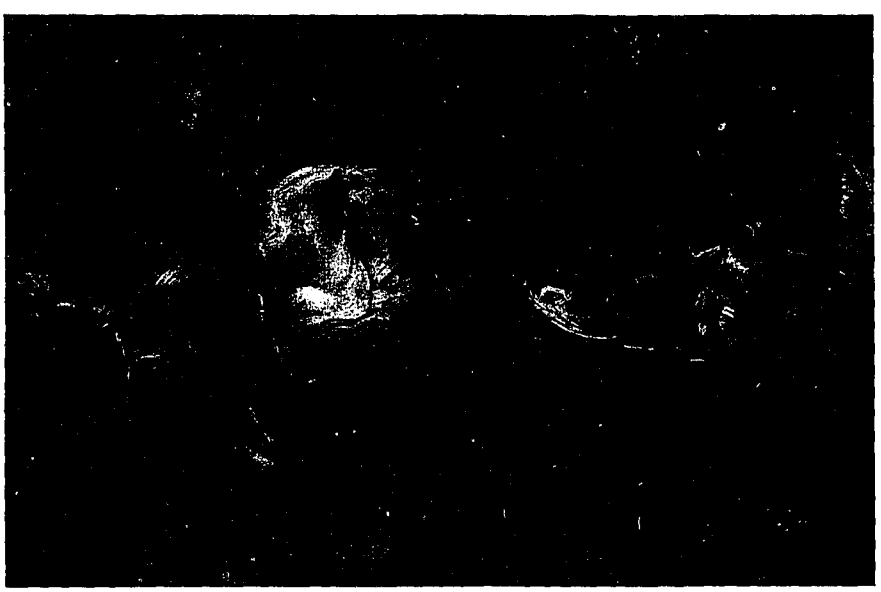


Figure 8) The Victory at Jülich

Figure 9) The Battle of Ivry, painting

Figure 10) The Battle of Ivry, sketch

Figure 11) The Triumph of Henry IV, sketch, London

Figure 12) The Triumph of Henry IV, sketch. Bayonne

Figure 13) The Triumph of Henry IV, sketch, New York

Figure 14) The Triumph of Henry IV, painting

Figure 15) The Capture of Paris

Figure 16) The Coronation of Henry IV

Figure 17) Position of subjects intended for the Henry Gallery

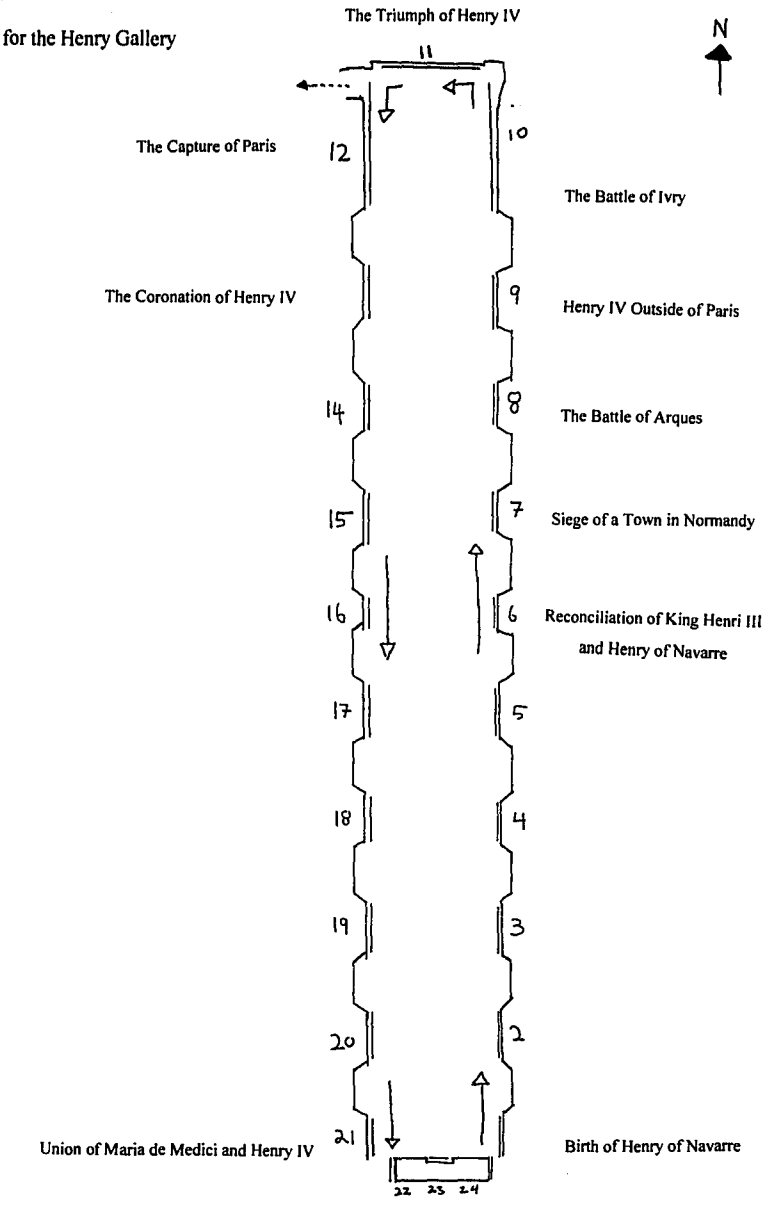
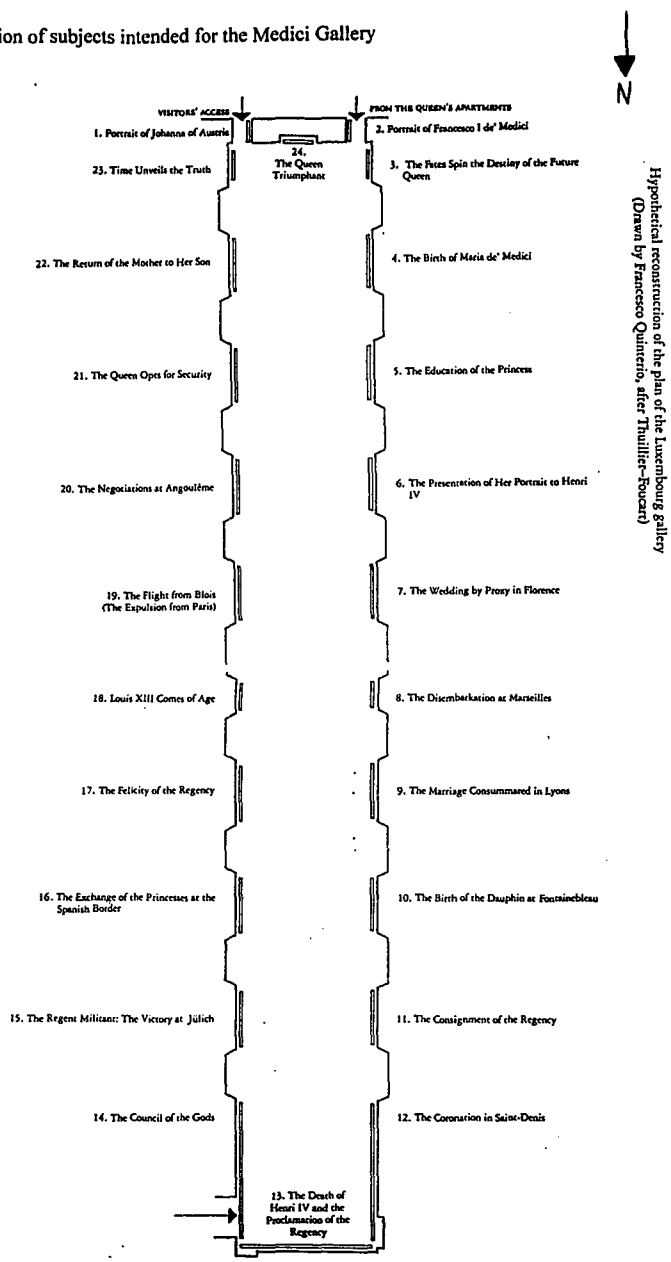


Figure 18) Position of subjects intended for the Medici Gallery



Hypothetical reconstruction of the plan of the Luxembourg gallery (Drawn by Francesco Quinterio, after Thuillier-Foucart)

Figure 19) The Consignment of the Regency

Figure 20) Propago imperi, emblem of Henry IV and Maria de Medici, 1603 (from De Bie, where erroneously dated 1604)

Figure 21) Propago imperi, emblem of Henry IV and Maria de Medici, 1604 (from Trésor de numismatique 1836)

Figure 22) Oriens Augusti Minerva tutrice, emblem of Maria de Medici, 1610 (from De Bie)

Figure 23) Oriens Augusti tutrice Minervae, emblem of Maria de medici, 1611 (from De Bie)

Figure 24) The Death of Henry IV and the Proclamation of the Regency

Figure 25) Layout of the Luxembourg Palace, seventeenth century

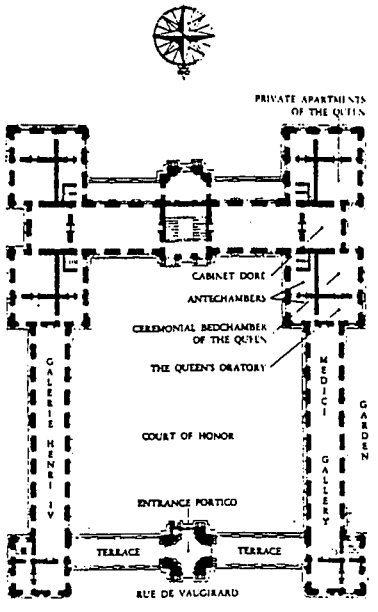


FIG. 1. – Plan du Palais du Luxembourg, vers 1757. Paris, Bibl. nat.