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FAMILY MODEL AND MYSTICAL BODY: WITNESSING GENDER THROUGH POLITICAL METAPHOR IN THE EARLY MODERN NATION-STATE

ALLISON ANNA TAIT

FRANCE BEFORE SUNRISE: TWO POLITICAL THEORIES MEET

The sixteenth century in France was a “constitutional moment”—a time when political theorists and jurists articulated a full and rich iteration of the value of constitutionalism and legal-parliamentary authority in relation to the monarch. It was also a moment to “witness” in many senses. It was a time to witness history—Henri II died in a jousting match, only to be followed by three degenerate sons who died in short succession; Catherine de Medici incited the hatred of rival factions; and thousands of Huguenots were massacred in Paris on St. Bartholomew’s Day in 1572. It was also a time of witnessing in a religious sense, as the Wars of Religion tore France apart and the powerful Catholic Ligue targeted the French Calvinists; and it was an instance when witnessing gained new associations related to a striking growth in France’s judicial infrastructure caused by the sale of new offices. By the end of the century, this tremendous political and social instability resulted in the development of a different perspective on political organization and absolutist theory came into circulation, bringing with it a significantly different sense of witnessing. During the first half of the seventeenth century these two political theories vied for the right to define the terms of engagement. For women, this battle between political perspectives was especially important. Each theory, constitutionalism and absolutism, represented a distinct vision of sovereignty—the former emphasized the need for strong judicial governance and the latter the need for a strong monarch—and affected whether women witnessed in a religious sense or in a legal one, as rightsholders and members of the political community.

Framing the theoretical conversation about sovereignty were two distinct political positions regarding the nature of kingship and what—if

any—checks should exist in relation to sovereign power. Jurists such as Claude Seyssel developed a theory of early modern constitutionalism that incorporated checks and balances on royal power and located substantive authority in legal precedent and social custom. Seyssel and his fellow constitutionalist jurists advocated readings of French history that often traced its origins to a model of kingship that was elective and based on the idea of the ruler being *primus inter pares* (first among equals) instead of an individual *apart*.¹ The second strand of theory, the absolutist position, was initially staked out by Jean Bodin in his well-known *Six livres de la République*, published in 1576. Bodin—in contrast to his constitutionalist contemporaries and in reaction to the violent chaos produced by the Wars of Religion—issued a call for a strong central sovereign who could neutralize warring factions and bring order to the developing nation-state. This call for sovereign command would be further developed in the seventeenth century as Louis XIII and Louis XIV became increasingly interested in asserting absolute power in response to overabundant noble privilege. However, in the almost hundred years that came between Bodin’s articulation of absolute power and Louis XIV’s real ascension to absolute power in the mid 1660s, political debate flourished and there was great give and take between the two schools of thought. By 1661, when Mazarin died and Louis XIV assumed total personal control of ruling the state, it was clear which philosophy would dominate. Until that moment, the coming of absolutism was still up for debate, as was the capacity of women. Women would witness either as political outsiders with no governmental agency or as members of a political collective, adept at leveraging the governmental apparatuses of justice.

As the seventeenth century opened, ideas that political theorists initially articulated in the sixteenth century came into play as the stakes of power increased and issues implicated in the theoretical dispute played out on the historical stage, where political battles between noble families and the monarch took place. While scholars discussed the evidence for and merit of the two philosophies, the debate also moved out of the library corridors and past the city streets, onto the stage and into the salon. Much of the debate transpired within the cultural arena—which was itself a contentious domain—and while more conservative rhetoric could be found on the theatrical stage, new modes of social and literary expression were being engineered in the female-centered salons. Within the cultural arena and the multiple sites it encompassed, one of the sup-

plest ways in which the contrast between constitutionalism and absolutism was articulated was in the use of political metaphor. The evocative frameworks of two distinct metaphors found their way not only into political treatises but also into literary production, where each did the work of weaving cultural archetypes into political theoretical foundations.

The preferred political metaphor in the constitutionalist context was the *mystical political body*, a concept that defined a system in which power was shared and the well-being of the community was linked to the well-being of the individual. Within the mystical political body, the theoretical possibility exists for women not only to occupy a civic space through organic (and organological) (Kantorowicz 1957, 270) association but also to articulate their perspective and its consequences for the political community in a civically approved way. In the mystical body, women approach a citizenship status impossible within the traditional family framework and their witnessing is closely associated with the expansive juridicalism of the sixteenth century. Women witness—they perceive with great clarity the political agenda driving sociocultural events—and they also have the ability to attest to their perceptions in an official capacity connected to “legal” witnessing. In the absolutist context, the family unit (in its most conventional makeup) is the primary expression of political organization. Within the family system, women can witness in that they have a firsthand account of something seen, heard, or experienced. Their witnessing, however, is confined to a quasi-“religious” sense of the word—they witness the strength of their beliefs and testify to these beliefs by affirming them as a moral duty, sometimes in the face of dispossession and death.

In both contexts women have the capacity to witness, in that they observe historical events, transgressive acts, and the consequences of a patriarchal agenda. In both contexts women also have some capacity to testify—or to act on the strength of what they have seen. In the mystical body paradigm, however, women are able to make the connection between witnessing and testifying. They articulate their knowledge in the public sphere, where they replicate judicial forums and highlight female inclusion in and value to the state by using and maximizing their rights as cultural and political agents. In the family model, by contrast, when witnessing does lead to action (testimony), the action almost invariably contravenes state interest, positive legislation, and political

sensibility. Women are not understood to have the kind of citizenship that permits them hearing as political speakers or legal witnesses.

SITUATING THE METAPHOR: THE NEOCLASSIC FAMILY TAKES THE STAGE

As the curtain rose on the seventeenth century, one of the earliest and most important dramatists to put these conflicts into verse was Pierre Corneille. As Jacqueline Lichtenstein notes, “Corneille is a political thinker, no doubt the most important political thinker of the seventeenth century. He is constantly raising questions about the nature of power [and] the foundations of its legitimacy” (1996, 81). Corneille’s theater marked an important new phase of interrelation between theater and politics and his plays define the parameters as well as the complications of the family model. For Corneille, the family is a fundamental political unit, and in this he is of one mind with Bodin. For both Corneille and Bodin, the metaphor of the family does significant work in incising the deep grooves of political interrelation. Drawing on Aristotle’s foundational political imagery, Bodin frames governmental structure in terms of the family: “The family [is] not only the true source and origin of the commonwealth, but also its principal constituent” (1967, 6). The family metaphor fits neatly into the hierarchical outline of absolute monarchy, and analogous models position man as sovereign and at the center of numerous relationships. The father possesses “a natural authority, subject neither to question nor to rejection” (Saxonhouse 1980, 15) and a mutually reinforcing equivalency exists between king and father. As Jonathan Dewald notes: “From Bodin in the sixteenth century through Montesquieu in the eighteenth, theorists argued that the authority of the polity rested on properly functioning families, and above all on proper respect for fathers. Order in the small, familial polity would lead to order in the polity at large and to respect for its father, the king” (1993, 78). According to this concept, biology is destiny, and power is reducible to the strongest pre-political unit, which is then amplified and reified in other contexts.

The problem inherent in this metaphor is that the construct supports a perpetual conflict between pre-political and political, between domestic and governmental. While the *family father* rules within his own sphere of influence, once he enters the public sphere he must abdicate his ultimate authority in favor of royal right and become one of the family members, a compliant member of a lower order. This is a problem for

men at certain political junctures, especially when family interest is in contention with the state, and often the problem is circumvented by allowing men the privileged status of warrior, one who functions at the bidding of the king and yet holds the power of life and death. This is, however, always a problem for women because they have no recognized identity outside a domestic one and are never able to escape the fate of hierarchy. Instead, they are called upon to remain “domestic” and become subordinate not only to the warrior-father but also to the monarch-father. The family model sets up a binarism between warrior and woman that Jean Bethke Elshtain has named the “Just Warrior/Beautiful Soul” dichotomy; as Elshtain points out, this model influences both domestic and political models. In this model, while the male is construed as an actor on the battlefield, contributing to the credit of the state, the woman must fill the necessary role of the beautiful soul, representing the home and hearth, which must be protected. Whether she needs protection is irrelevant; what matters is that the warrior must have a moral and emotive reason to wage war (Elshtain 1987). There are exceptional dissenters, but they often confirm the rule. As Linda Kerber states, “Antigone and Cassandra are both outsiders . . . [but] both roles maintain the classic dichotomy in which men are the defenders of the state and women are the protected” (1993, 104). Female behavior is forced into one of two categories: passive acceptance of the role of “hearth-tender” or criminal dissent. Witnessing results in silent assessment or unspoken outrage, and testimony, if it exists, is usually a tragic affair, a transgressive act that speaks to individual moral belief and state error—and results in death.

These classic female models, shaped during a formative time for the nascent field of political theory, set standards for women’s witnessing and created archetypes that were transhistorical in their ability to communicate deeply ingrained notions of family roles and female nature. As Corneille began writing, neoclassicism dominated the stage and dramatists engaged vigorously with classical sources in an attempt not only to lend a certain gravitas to their enterprise and but also to claim their own particular versions of these universal narratives. Additionally, the political context in the early seventeenth century was such that there were many perceived similarities between France and the classic political societies. The early seventeenth century was a time that bore witness to the new and evolving idea of the nation-state, and classic narratives

addressed many of the same issues that compelled and inspired Corneille and his colleagues. Using classic sources, then, neoclassic dramatists sought to understand the location and limits of the family while advocating a “generous” and “glorious” loyalty to the *patria*.

If Antigone is Kerber’s example of a classic prototype—a political outsider and domestic loyalist who is forced to act against the state because the family and the polity are mutually exclusive spheres of influence—she had many kindred female spirits on the stage, especially in the theater of Corneille. Corneille’s heroines are often like Antigone in their dedication to family honor—a duty that trumps both romantic love and state concern. *Le Cid*, which was a popular sensation when it was produced and published in 1636, struck an emotive chord with audiences, who were enthralled by the noble dilemma of family duty opposed to sentimental attachment. In the play, the noble heroine Chimène is caught in a conflict between her father and her beloved—her father insults her suitor, Rodrigue, who is in turn drawn into a duel in which he kills the father. Chimène, a powerless witness to the wages of the duel, cannot marry Rodrigue, the man who caused her father’s death. To satisfy family duty, she seeks revenge by asking the king for Rodrigue’s head. Rodrigue, however, leaves for battle, triumphs over the Moors, and is able to return to the community to ask for Chimène’s hand in marriage. When the king approves the match, Chimène has doubts about its appropriateness, asking the king, “And when you ask this measure from my feeling of duty, / is it entirely in accord with your sense of justice?” (5.4.1808–9; translation mine). The king, however, exerts his prerogative as the ultimate father and sets law aside: “Time has often rendered lawful / that which at first seemed impossible without being a crime” (5.4.1813–14; translation mine). Chimène witnesses the breakdown of both domestic and then public law, and what began as family protest, premised on the law of one father, must be transformed into acceptance of the political law of another, higher-placed, father. Witnessing—Chimène’s own emotional response and consequent intuitive analysis of the situation—does not connect to action, in that she cannot act on her perception of what is right without crossing royal opinion. What she must witness—without comment if she is to preserve the glorious continuation of the nation-state—is the fundamentally changeable and arbitrary nature of paternal law where women are concerned. Exceptions are made in the name of the state, for those who serve the state, and this ensures that exceptions will never be made for women.

In tragic works such as *Horace* (1640), the drama of daughterly duty and heroic exceptionalism is even more forceful and demonstrates the risks of not complying with paternal law. In *Horace*, the dispute between family and state is polarized within the family unit itself and, as Dewald notes, is gendered as well: “*Horace* presents public and private realms [that] oppose and threaten each other, in gendered terms: the public presented as male, the private as female. Father and son in the play insist on the superiority of public obligations, whereas sisters and daughters call for the primacy of private affections” (1993, 78). Camille, sister to Horace, protests the senseless violence of warfare that is occurring around her and insists on undermining the glory attached to bloodshed through her speech, so much so that her brother must kill her to silence her opposition. Camille, unlike Chimène, is a noncompliant witness to brutality in the name of the state and ultimately dies on the altar of state interest. Camille’s death lays bare the charade of “rule of law” when sovereign interest is at stake; like Chimène, Camille is a cipher when confronted with the irrefutable logic of the victorious warrior. As Tulle says to Horace, the hero of the battle, pardoning him after he has killed his sister:

Such servants are the very lifeblood of kings,
 And such servants are held above the law.
 Let law be silent then . . . (5.3.1753–55; translation mine)

Women witness the failure of the rule of law—the idea that government is a body of law, not a congregation of men—in the face of exceptions made on behalf of those who serve the state and the arrogant sovereignty of an unchecked monarch. Female witnessing is a powerlessness to act; women can choose to either accept the will, voice, and authority of the state or risk punishment and death. Their testimony, the active voice, is nothing more than Camille’s dying cry.

If the figure of Antigone provides one universal model that is particularized by Corneille, there is another figure of witnessing and non-cooperation—one that Elshtain briefly references and one that Kerber does not include in her statement about classic female response to male brutality. This is Clytemnestra, Aeschylus’s murderous queen in the *Oresteia*, who provides an alternate model for the neoclassic dramatists

as her character loosely defines the foundational image of a woman who vigorously refuses to accept patriarchal status quo. This is a female prototype that refuses to witness patriarchal bias and will neither accept paternal law without protest, like Chimène, nor become an unwitting victim, like Camille. This form of incandescent female rage is strongly present in the neoclassic imagination, and dramatists used it to reinforce the normative model of powerful, political women as tyrannical and homicidal. Corneille's first tragedy, *Medea* (1635), underscores the primacy of this model, and *Rodogune* (1644) provides an in-depth exploration of the evil that comes when women possess political agency and power. In *Rodogune*, Cleopatra, the evil queen, is an unnatural wife who has killed her husband, an unnatural mother who plays her twin sons against each other and ultimately kills one of them, and an unnatural ruler who brings tyranny. Cleopatra has usurped her husband's throne, murdering him when he reappears after the war and tries to repossess it, and as the play opens the kingdom is in political turmoil, having descended into a brutal oppression. Cleopatra refuses to allow transparency into the political process, leading her sons as well as her subjects through a maze of manipulated information. She plots surreptitious revenge against Rodogune, the onetime mistress of her husband, the beloved of both her sons, and a symbol of femininity validated by masculine desire. Ultimately, Cleopatra's scheming results in the death of one son as well as her own demise; her legacy to the other twin son and Rodogune is a family history of shame and crime. Cleopatra's sin encompasses deviant maternal behavior; however, her greater transgression is grabbing political power from the male patrimony and lineage. Cleopatra's role, like that of Clytemnestra, is to demonstrate the dangers of power-hungry women and what can happen when "the mother" becomes the dominant organizing principle. A mother, unlike a father, is not born to rule, and Cleopatra underscores the tragic and destructive outcomes of female sovereignty, confirming that women have no business within the polity. While Chimène and Camille remain constant to the ideal of family—to their possible and actual detriment—Cleopatra demolishes the sanctuary of the household, just as she destroys the health of the state. Determined to transition from witnessing to acting, Cleopatra imitates male justice and chooses to testify through violent action, leaving devastation in her wake. Unfortunately for the ruinous queen, female violence, unlike male violence, has no

official role and no governmental blessing and in the end, Cleopatra must die.

(RE)SITUATING THE METAPHOR: SALON WOMEN TAKE THE STAND

While the Comédie-Française was staging epic masterpieces, and Corneille and his colleagues were producing plays that would define national and family politics, salon women such as Madeline de Scudéry were formulating another version of women's witnessing: one that was premised on the constitutional idea of full participation for all "citizens." This more equitable vision of political organization and a woman's capacity to contribute to the community aligned with the constitutionalist model and presented the possibility of a political corporation that was protodemocratic, based on political representation. This alternate metaphor—the image of mystical political body—was one that resonated strongly with noble women of the early seventeenth century and found cultural application in their literary production. Its political roots, however, went back to medieval theology, and constitutionalism's vigor and depth were located in far-reaching, explicit comparisons made between the church and the state. These comparisons had two direct results that biased political theory toward the juridical and the inclusive. First, theologians asserted that the church and the state were to be constructed along parallel lines, noting that the church's "highest governing authority lies with the General Council as the representative assembly of the faithful, and that the Pope's apparent plenitude of power is in effect conceded to him as a matter of administrative convenience" (Skinner 1978, 116). The implications for the secular state were radical and the idea that the head of the secular community was in fact a servant of the people proved a weighty counterpoint to the idea of executive privilege. Second, through the application of the religious model, the political community gained a sense of stability and transcendence as the weight and significance attached to the religious *corpus mysticum* transferred to the mystical political body.² Members of the secular state, like the ecclesiastical state, cohered and related "mystically" by belonging to a group defined not just by location or tradition but by a governing, intellectual principle. Like the religious faithful, "citizens" were citizens in one sense because of their shared belief in a transcendent operating principle—in this context it was, however, the political corporation and the ideas of just power and mutual aid. A concept of a synergistic political organization was born

and French jurists of the sixteenth century exploited the mystical body metaphor to maximum effect. From the outset, this metaphor of “mystical” cohesion in the political corporation indicated a more progressive idea of limited executive power, highlighting the notion that every part has a symbiotic relationship with the whole and that political power is a shared possession as well as a collaborative process that depends on the optimal functioning of all members.

The primary consequences of this metaphor is that the possibility of being external to the political body is not theoretically supported and the condition of women, although not specifically targeted, shifts. At no point in this political discussion is gender equity mentioned explicitly. This metaphor, however, signals a more equitable social design by locating agency in the individual rather than the ruler; privileging justice, rather than obedience; and detailing the rights of the subject rather than the responsibilities. As Charlotte C. Wells notes in her discussion of early modern citizenship, a constitutionalist system could be represented as a “web of connections among citizens” while the absolutist construct meant that the “republic as a whole was held together by the vertical bond of allegiance between prince and subject” (1995, 97).³ Within the constitutionalist “web of connections,” women were able to identify as “citizens” in a way that was denied to them within the family model, in which the power current ran uniquely from the top down. Elite women, who had the resources to take advantage of “citizenship” amenities, were functionally able to prosper under this model. Aristocratic women possessed public voice to give testimony and the space within which to give testimony—the salon. The salon not only authorized and narrativized female witnessing, it also functioned as a site of exemplary female engagement, and salon gatherings of like-minded individuals (individuals of “spirit” and “distinction”) were themselves moments of witnessing defined by reflexivity and a collective sense of self-awareness. The salon was a female-controlled environment that, although still technically a space within the home, was far removed from the family model. And, as such scholars as Carolyn Lougee and Joan DeJean have shown, salon women, though often married, did not prioritize their roles as wives and mothers and were opposed to the forcible association of womanhood with conjugal and maternal duty. Within this female-centric space, there was a new goal—to celebrate exemplary women and create a new model of female discourse.

Leveraging the same classical models and engaging in the same discourses as their male counterparts, Scudéry and her circle renegotiated the classic narratives and inserted a female perspective. Published just six years after Corneille's *Le Cid*, Madeleine de Scudéry's *Les Femmes illustres* is a fine example of reconstructed female discourse, in that Scudéry revisits the stories of mythic and historic women to give voice to the female perspective. In her prefatory letter to the second volume, Scudéry tells her readers that "the Glory of [our] Sex" is the object of her endeavor and that the entire work is nothing less than the pleading of the female cause. She lets Hecuba speak, pens Helen's speech to Paris, and creates Cleopatra's oration to Mark Antony. In each "harangue," Scudéry briefly constructs a "case" for her heroine that is designed in the form of testimony given before a jury. Each story has both an opening "argument" and a final judgment on the effect and success of the speech. While Scudéry often focuses on traditional female virtues such as constancy and selfless love, each argument is nonetheless an attempt to vindicate female action and is clearly designed to both manipulate sympathy and generate goodwill toward women who have been wronged by their lovers and by subsequent historical retellings. Women control the narrative, in a way that they do not elsewhere, and therefore control the framing of the story—what the reader sees and how the reader perceives what she sees—as well as the final verdict. Through Scudéry's work, women gain representation in the cultural-historical imagination (as well as the literary canon) and, as her heroines testify in the court of aristocratic public opinion, their stories support the idea that women possess agency as well as value to the state, while the conjured image of a courtroom jury underscores the importance of legal review as an alternative to royal decree. Salon women thereby enter the civic system through the thin end of the wedge, taking control of the terms of the debate and making the connection between witnessing and testifying in a procedural sense that implicates both the court of public opinion and Scudéry's explicit case for the virtues of women's participation. Women fully actualize the space of the salon, appropriate the concrete space of the published page, and evoke the important space of the courtroom.

Apart from these heroines who redeem themselves through voice and intellectual agency, there is another important model of female leadership and civic participation in the salon imaginary—one that reconfigures women's relationship to physical as well as political power and

reclaims the violence symbolized by a figure such as Clytemnestra. Scudéry and her circle celebrated “illustrious” amazon warriors who embodied the twin concepts of noble spirit and action. The amazon was appealing to salon women in that she represented another model by which to refute the institution of marriage. In addition, the amazon was considered to be a just warrior who fought primarily for the greater social good. Even outside of the salon, however, the amazon and her spiritual sisters were much discussed: “the early 1640s saw a veritable outpouring of portrait books of women referred to as ‘illustrious,’ ‘generous,’ ‘heroic,’ or ‘strong,’” *Les Femmes illustres* among them (DeJean 1991, 28). Strong women, in this context, use violence in service of the state and the state reciprocates by valuing female military engagement. Strong women are again able to make the connection between witnessing and action, but this time the action is not rhetorical; it is martial. Echoing heroic sentiments that would traditionally come from the mouths of men, Scudéry’s Zenobia speaks about constancy, even after being captured by enemy forces: “It is truly at such times that it is necessary to have a heroic soul, and never let it be said to me that in such encounters despair is a virtue and constancy a weakness. . . . Let no one tell me that this sort of constancy is more appropriate to philosophers than to kings. . . . There is no difference between philosophers and kings, except that the one teaches true wisdom and the others should practice it” (Scudéry 2004, 81).

What is remarkable about Scudéry’s presentation of the virtue of courage is that she problematizes it in an adjoining argument, underscoring the idea that there are always multiple points of access and interpretation in narratives and that there is not one, monolithic frame of reference. In the another argument, Sophonisba, queen of Carthage, faces captivity as well, but reacts differently to the idea of constancy, saying, “Such sentiments are suitable for philosophers but not for kings, whose every action should be a heroic example of courage” (Scudéry 2004, 73–74). The multiple perspectives represented by the individual women produce a rich collection of portraits that interact to produce something that is layered, inclusive, and representative of the complexity of civil society.⁴ While these noble responses to situations of military conflict bring to mind male operating models, the differential lies in an ability to see two sides to an issue, two definitions of a virtue. This differential is what takes women’s military participation out of the family model and

places it squarely within the lines of a mystical political body, where all member perspectives contribute to the greater good. In this framework, women observe and participate in historical events *and* testify to their beliefs through strong speech and action. Through Scudéry's subversion of the family model, their strong acts of testimony do not contravene state interest, and female voice is given both volume and amplitude to express what stage counterparts cannot.

ECLIPSED BY THE SUN: FROM THE BARRICADES TO VERSAILLES

What emerges from the exploration of these two political metaphors is that they trace the sometimes subtle and sometimes unsettling points of connection between political organization, women's agency, and a capacity to witness in this early modern context. When the law of the father stands—unchallenged and often arbitrary—women can only witness from the perspective of an outsider, witnessing a truth that may or may not be seen, understood, or accepted by the community. It is a witnessing that concentrates on the moral authority of the wronged, and given the pervasive divide between home and public square, it is significant that the wrong done is not a legal wrong with the potential for constructive outcome or political efficacy. The rule of law—a system of government that approximates evenhanded, impersonal treatment of all citizens—fractures when a woman's cause is at stake; consequently, any female action that occurs is dissent, counter to the official political agenda and without any avenue of either legal or political recourse. However, when unchecked paternal rule cedes to a governance process that incorporates the perspectives of diverse institutions and parties, precedent and judicial influence, women are able to conjure the courtroom, reclaim voice outside the home, and actualize the potentiality of witnessing. Women articulate their own political perspective and value to the state and formulate their arguments to win support and a positive verdict from a jury of peers. The mystical political body, the mysterious and synergistic social corporation, encompasses female speech and action—witnessing as well as testimony.

What also emerges from the comparison is that women benefit from the promise of judicial influence, bringing as it does the model of a more balanced and process-oriented community that does not encourage or tolerate exceptionalism. This does not mean that women gained full access to the political and social rights that men possessed at the time, but

the first part of the seventeenth century—when aristocratic and judicial privilege favored female political engagement and before the certainty of absolutism set in—is nonetheless exceptional in the strong women who were leaders in both political and social circles. The women of the salons, who called themselves the “new amazons,” were important thought-leaders who pioneered new ways for women to influence and participate in cultural and political life. During these years, France saw the regencies of two queens—Marie de Medici and Anne of Austria—and thereby spent more than a decade under the official rule of women. In studying the female iconography of the period, DeJean remarks, “New portrayals of female power were developed, as if to document women’s capacity to govern” (1991, 26). In addition, there were a number of strong noble women from some of the most important families, such as the duchesse de Longueville or the princesse de Condé, who—although generally at great odds with the royal administration—exhibited the same interest in gaining political influence and were widely acknowledged to be extremely powerful.

The crowning example of this conjunction, one that underscores the connection between female cause and the interest of the jurists, was the Fronde, an ultimately unsuccessful civil war started in 1648. The first part of the Fronde—the parliamentary Fronde—was a strike by Parisian judges against the overwhelming tax burden that Mazarin imposed. In the second part, nobles joined the fight to preserve the aristocratic privilege of local feudal jurisdiction and protest undue taxation as an indicator of an overreaching centralized government. Although the failure of the Fronde is often attributed to a lack of organization between various contingents who held conflicting motives and goals, it is of great note that the magistrates and noble women saw their interests as aligned against the challenge of exceptional sovereignty. During the Fronde, noble women exemplified new models of female action: “More than any other conflict in French history, the Fronde can be seen as a woman’s war. For once women had taken command, the resistance to absolutism remained” (DeJean 1991, 37). Women witnessed history from the barricades, and the Fronde was one of the great “moments of resistance” in response to the absolutist drive of progress. It was, however, ultimately only momentary and in little over a decade after the Fronde, all power—political, social, and cultural—moved to a new, centralized location, Versailles. By the early 1660s, Louis XIV, having come of age and gained

political facility, took control of the state and built a court society that became its own isolated culture, a model solar system contained within the walls and grounds of a prosperous palace. Versailles became the ultimate household—the ultimate family model—and the mystical political body fell into ill health and negligent care, signaling an end to engaged female witnessing.

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NOTES

1. Outside of Seyssel, the best example of this tradition is Francois Hotman and his primary work, *Franco Gallia*. Others include Guillaume Budé and Justus Lipsius. Seyssel and Budé were writing in the early half of the sixteenth century, while Lipsius and Hotman wrote in the second half of the century, contemporary with Bodin.

2. As Kantorowicz notes, “In short, the expression ‘mystical body,’ which originally had a liturgical or sacramental meaning, took on a connotation of sociological content.” The term was first applied to the church (by Boniface VIII) and then to the political community in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance (1957, 196).

3. Wells notes that generally citizenship rights were more expansive in the sixteenth century, as measured by property rights and in cases concerning the *droit d’aubain* (the right of the king to claim the estate of any unnaturalized foreigner who died on French soil without legal heirs).

4. The editors and translators of this Scudéry volume note that they included both of these speeches regarding the courage of suicide when faced with captivity “because they form a paired set in the tradition of the sophistic and humanist rhetorical exercise of arguing on both sides of a question” (Donawerth and Strongson 2004, 22–23).

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