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The Daughters of the Fronde: French Aristocratic Women and the Subversion of Bourbon Absolutist Culture, 1661-1727

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The Daughters of the Fronde: French Aristocratic Women and the Subversion of Bourbon

Absolutist Culture, 1661-1727

by

Jordan David Hallmark

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
History

Thesis Committee:
Thomas Lockett, Chair
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Portland State University
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Abstract

The turbulent events of the *Fronde des Princes* (Fronde of the Princes), which saw the French nobility stage a failed rebellion against the monarchical administration of France's chief minister, Cardinal Mazarin, between 1650 and 1652, have been portrayed in the existing historiography as the swan song of a pre-absolutist nobility seeking to preserve its feudal identity as the king's partner in governance and military affairs. Indeed, as many historians of early modern France have observed, the policies pursued by Cardinal Mazarin following the monarchy's victory over the rebel princes of the Fronde, and subsequently expanded upon by Louis XIV after the commencement of his personal reign in 1661, would consolidate political authority in the hands of the crown and build a centralized administration that replaced high-ranking nobles with professional bureaucrats. Rather than inciting further acts of armed aristocratic resistance, however, the absolutist system developed under Louis XIV, according to most of the existing historiography, assured the loyalty and compliance of the nobility by rewarding obedience with special privileges and distinctions. Enduring until the French Revolution of 1789, this system of royal patronage has been cited by scholars as one of the few avenues through which French women could attain political influence, albeit in an unofficial capacity, by cultivating close, typically intimate, relationships with the sovereign. During the *Fronde des Princes*, a number of French women, including Anne-Marie-Louise d'Orléans, duchesse de Montpensier, had emerged as important political and military leaders, fighting on behalf of the nobility against the centralizing reforms and patriarchal authority of the monarchical state. Yet, scholars have argued that the

strategies of political opposition pursued by women during the Fronde came to an abrupt end with the monarchy's victory in 1652, thereafter confining women's political participation to the spaces of the *salon* and the royal court where women's political influence would come to depend entirely on close relationships with powerful men.

This thesis challenges this historiographical consensus by examining the strategies of monarchical opposition directed against Louis XIV, and subsequently against the regent, Philippe d'Orléans, by French aristocratic women who endeavored to carry on the political, social, and cultural legacy of the Fronde. Beginning with a thorough analysis of the anti-monarchical visual and literary culture that emerged around the *frondeuses*, this thesis demonstrates how this culture of monarchical opposition was continued after the rebellion through the counter-cultural practices developed by three daughters of the Fronde: Anne-Marie-Louise d'Orléans, duchesse de Montpensier (1627-1693), a direct participant in the Fronde and daughter of *frondeur* Gaston d'Orléans; Marie Jeanne Baptiste, Duchess of Savoy (1644-1724), also known as *Madama Reale*, the daughter of *frondeur* Charles Amadeus, duc de Nemours; and Louise Bénédicte de Bourbon, duchesse du Maine (1676-1753), the granddaughter of the leading *frondeur*, Louis de Bourbon, *le Grand Condé*. Drawing from contemporary memoirs, political pamphlets, and literature on women's capacity for political leadership, this thesis also relies on less canonical and often overlooked historical sources, including paintings, architecture, theatrical performances, and other forms of visual and ritual culture. By examining these material and literary traces of the oppositional political strategies pursued by the duchesse de Montpensier, the Duchess of Savoy, and the duchesse du

Maine in the context of the patriarchal and cultural hegemony built around the absolutist image of Louis XIV, this thesis shows how the daughters of the Fronde attempted to disrupt the monologic display of sovereignty within the representational public sphere, offering a new perspective on women's political engagement within—and in opposition to—the French absolutist state.

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INTRODUCTION

The Fronde des Princesses

From 1650 to 1652, factions within the French nobility engaged in an armed revolt against the French monarchical state and its chief minister, Cardinal Mazarin, igniting a civil war that became known as the *Fronde des princes*. Unfolding during the minority of Louis XIV, this chaotic period of civil conflict has been characterized by many historians as the French nobility's final act of resistance against the creation of the modern absolutist state, a centralized political apparatus that threatened to strip the kingdom's *noblesse d'épée* of its feudal autonomy and provincial authority.¹ While more recent studies have looked to offer a more nuanced account of this reductive interpretation, the fact remains that the *Fronde des princes* was indeed the last time that the French nobility would take up arms against the monarchy of *ancien régime* France. The *Fronde des princes* has been of particular interest to historians of early modern France, not only as a pivotal episode in the formation of the French absolutist state, but also as a political and military movement in which women played leading roles. As the eleven-year-old Louis XIV was too young to rule at the outset of the Fronde, the responsibility of governing the kingdom fell to the young king's mother, Anne of Austria, who, as regent, was tasked with leading the monarchy's response to the rebellion after

¹ See Orest Ranum, *The Fronde: A French Revolution 1648-1652* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), 343-347; Anne E. Duggan, *Salonnières, Furies, and Fairies: The Politics of Gender and Cultural Change in Absolutist France* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 19; Geoffrey Treasure, *Mazarin: The Crisis of Absolutism in France* (London: Routledge, 1995), 216-229.

Cardinal Mazarin was forced into exile. While Anne of Austria was not the first woman in French history to serve as regent, the political and military leadership displayed by the women on the other side of the conflict, the *frondeuses*, was without precedent in *ancien régime* France.² Transgressing their prescribed feminine roles as docile wives and mothers, women like the duchesse de Chevreuse were instrumental in cementing alliances against the monarchy among the competing factions of the nobility, while other *frondeuses*, like the duchesse de Montpensier, launched military offensives against the armies of the French crown. In the end, however, the *frondeuses*' tenure as political and military leaders would prove short-lived. By late 1652, the monarchy had successfully quashed the rebellion, and the women who had served at its helm were driven into exile. In 1661, ten years after officially reaching the age of majority, Louis XIV assumed full control of the kingdom, inaugurating a dynastic era of strong, centralized, absolutist—and exclusively male—kingship that would endure until the French Revolution. In this post-Fronde era, women would never again serve as regents, nor participate in French political life in any official capacity.

Scholars have disagreed about the exact motives that inspired the *frondeuses*' political action against the crown, with some scholars, like Joan Kelly and James Collins, arguing that the women who assumed political and military roles in the rebellion shared their male counterparts' objective of defending their noble families' ancestral rights and

² For a detailed study of queen regents in France, see Éliane Viennot, *La France, Les Femmes et Le Pouvoir*, vols. 1-2 (Paris: Perrin, 2006-2008).

feudal authority against the centralizing reforms of Cardinal Mazarin.³ Other scholars, on the other hand, including Joan DeJean, have maintained that the *frondeuses* were fighting, not as Orléanistes or Condéens, but as *femmes fortes*, working to dismantle the patriarchal foundations of royal sovereignty in an effort to secure a role for women in the political arena.⁴ Notwithstanding these varying interpretations of the *frondeuses*' motives, studies of this period have been remarkably consistent in their assessment of the subsequent political position of women in France after the Fronde. This historiographic consensus maintains that the monarchy's victory over the Fronde signaled the end of women's public engagement in the French political sphere, or, as DeJean writes, "the abrupt and definitive cessation of women's direct official participation in French political life for the remainder of the ancien régime."⁵ Anyone with a casual interest in French history will, of course, be aware that women continued to play influential roles in French political life after 1653. In the last decades of his reign, Louis XIV's morganatic wife, the marquise de Maintenon, used her proximity to the king to exercise an enormous influence over political affairs, becoming, in the words of Domna C. Stanton, "the most powerful person in France, second only to Louis XIV."⁶ During the reign of the Sun King's successor, Louis XV, Jeanne Antoinette Poisson, marquise de Pompadour would also

³ Joan Kelly, "Early Feminist Theory and the 'Querelle des Femmes', 1400-1789," *Signs* 8, no. 1 (Autumn 1982): 22; James B. Collins, "The Economic Role of Women in Seventeenth-Century France," *French Historical Studies* 16, no. 2 (Autumn 1989): 455.

⁴ Joan DeJean, *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 41-42.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁶ Domna C. Stanton, "Introduction," in *The Dynamics of Gender in Early Modern France: Women Writ, Women Writing*, ed. Domna C. Stanton (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2014), 13.

command an extraordinary influence over the kingdom's economic, political, and diplomatic activities, first as the king's mistress and later as his trusted advisor. Moving beyond the political influence wielded by royal mistresses, scholars like Dena Goodman and Joan Landes have argued that the women at the helm of the eighteenth-century Parisian *salons*—the *salonnières*—also participated in French political life by creating a new venue for intellectual discourse, using their position of authority over these prestigious institutions to build networks of social and political influence.⁷ While historians continue to debate whether the influence exerted by royal mistresses and *salonnières* in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries amounted to real political power, scholars like DeJean and Anne Dugan stress that women's participation in French political life following the establishment of the absolutist state under Louis XIV should not be confused with the “direct official” political action of the *frondeuses*.⁸ The political influence exercised by women in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France was not, DeJean claims, a byproduct of the Fronde, but rather a “return to the most traditional (within the French tradition at least) manner of exercising influence, as royal mistresses.”⁹ Thus, in contrast to the women of the Fronde, whose political engagement was built upon their public opposition to the patriarchal system of monarchical authority, the political influence of mistresses like the marquise de Pompadour or *salonnières* like

⁷ Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 303-4; Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 17-40.

⁸ Duggan, 19; DeJean, 42.

⁹ DeJean, 42.

Madame Geoffrin derived entirely from their close relationships with powerful men, relationships in which they, as women, were socially, legally, and politically subordinate.

Upon reviewing the historiography, then, we are presented with the following sequence of historical events. First, the social and political disorder occasioned by the Fronde had allowed French aristocratic women to assume highly visible political roles by operating outside of, and in direct opposition to, the traditional patriarchal structure of the French monarchical state. Second, the centralization of political power under Louis XIV, having subdued the political opposition of the nobility, restricted aristocratic women's political engagement to approved feminine spaces like the royal court and the *salon*, wherein women's political influence depended on gaining proximity to patriarchal authority. This present thesis seeks to question this interpretation of the Fronde's legacy by examining how the daughters and granddaughters of French nobles who fought against the crown during the *Fronde des princes* continued to challenge the absolutist monarchical system after 1652. While French women would no longer lead armed forces against the crown after the Fronde, this thesis will argue that the cultural system devised to project the absolute sovereignty of Louis XIV in the decades following the monarchy's victory over the *frondeuses* would provide a new venue for women to challenge the patriarchal authority of the French monarchical state.

While Louis XIV was certainly not the first sovereign to take great pains in crafting and disseminating his royal image, the vast cultural enterprise stewarded by the king and his ministers to create and maintain what Peter Burke has termed "the myth of

Louis XIV” was exceptional both in its scope and bureaucratic structure.¹⁰ Using an array of different media, including painting, sculpture, architecture, decorative objects, prints, books, poems, operas, plays, festivals, gardens, medals, chivalric rituals, and other court ceremonies, Louis XIV and his ministers enlisted an army of image-makers to render the king’s intangible political identity as an absolute monarch both highly visible and publicly accessible through the hegemonic cultural production of the French monarchical state. Yet, if Louis XIV’s cultural system created a political venue in which monarchical authority could be displayed and legitimized, a venue that Jürgen Habermas has referred to as the sphere of “representation,” this cultural system was also vulnerable to appropriation and subversion.¹¹ Over the course of Louis XIV’s fifty-four-year personal reign, French aristocratic women with direct ties to the Fronde would challenge the patriarchal construction of French kingship, and even construct their own sovereign identities, by overseeing the creation of various forms of visual, literary, and ritual culture that appropriated or subverted the symbolic language of royal absolutism within the representational sphere.

Since the late 1980s, the concept of the public sphere has proved ubiquitous in the historiography of early modern French social, political, and intellectual life, particularly in the English-speaking world.¹² Developed by German sociologist Jürgen Habermas,

¹⁰ Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 6.

¹¹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 7.

¹² For example, see Landes; Goodman; Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Durham, NC: Duke University Press,

who introduced the concept in his 1962 study, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*, it was not until the publication of an English-language translation of Habermas's work in 1989 that the idea of the public sphere gained greater traction among historians. According to Habermas, virtually all communication in pre-democratic monarchical societies occurred within private social, professional, and family units; that is, there existed no collective consciousness of a greater social, political, or civic public by whom the government might be held accountable. The only public institutional authority prior to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the monarch, who, as the incarnation of the state, represented his political authority to his subjects through rituals of kingship. Beginning in the late seventeenth century, however, Habermas observes the development of a new public sphere that would act as a buffer between the representational public sphere of monarchical authority and the private realm of civil society. Habermas attributes the emergence of this new public sphere to the increasing popularity of semi-public venues of sociability like coffeeshops and the French *salon*. In these gathering places, previously private concerns about political issues would be shared and debated, turning individual grievances into the foundations of public opinion, and ultimately, catalysts for political protest.¹³

1991); Sarah Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).

¹³ Habermas, 5-50.

Although Habermas did not identify as a Marxist theorist, his thesis on the development of this new public sphere, which he called the “bourgeois public sphere,” is inextricably linked to a larger socio-economic narrative about the ascendancy of the capitalist—and exclusively male—bourgeois class in the decades leading up to the French Revolution. Yet, in most of the historiography that later formed around Habermas’s concept of the public sphere, terms such as “bourgeois”, “capitalist”, and even “class” are conspicuously absent. Instead, historians like Dena Goodman and Joan Landes employed Habermas’s concept as a framework to illustrate how the women of the *salons* in eighteenth-century France, while excluded from official positions of political authority, shaped political and intellectual discourse within the emergent public sphere. Since the publication of Landes’s *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*, many subsequent studies have embraced this conceptual framework in an attempt to draw a straight line between women’s participation in the *salon* and the dissemination of Enlightenment political thought.¹⁴ Yet, for all the attention that the concept of the public sphere has garnered among historians of eighteenth-century France, the other side of Habermas’s thesis, the representational public sphere, has rarely figured in the historiography. Using the representational public sphere as a conceptual framework for analyzing the cultural representation of royal sovereignty under Louis XIV, the following chapters will examine the strategies used by French aristocratic women to

¹⁴ For an overview of the influence of Habermas’s conception of the public sphere on the historiography of women in early modern France, see Steven D. Kale, “Women, the Public Sphere, and the Persistence of Salons,” *French Historical Studies* 25, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 115-148.

challenge the public authority of the French monarchy and construct their own sovereign identities within the political infrastructure of the representational public sphere.

After providing a brief overview of the history of the *Fronde des princes* and the highly visible political and military roles assumed by women who participated in the rebellion, Chapter I will examine the anti-monarchical visual and literary culture that emerged around women of the Fronde, including Anne Marie Louise d'Orléans, duchesse de Montpensier. Focusing on the literary and iconographic tradition of the *femme forte*, and the circulation of anti-government pamphlets known as *mazarinades*, this chapter will show how these two subversive movements, the one cultural and the other political, merged to form a political culture centered around women's political and military opposition to monarchical authority. In Chapter II, we turn our attention to the development of the patriarchal cultural system of Louis XIV in the first decades after the Fronde and examine how the duchesse de Montpensier's strategy of monarchical opposition moved beyond the battlefield and into the representational public sphere. Chapter III takes us south of the Alps to examine how another daughter of the Fronde, Marie Jeanne Baptiste, Duchess of Savoy, or *Madama Reale*, challenged the exclusion of women from French political life by appropriating the cultural foundations of Bourbon royal absolutism to construct a sovereign identity beyond France's territorial borders. In chapters four and five, we will investigate two different aspects of the counter-cultural strategies pursued during the last years of Louis XIV's reign by Louise Bénédicte de Bourbon-Condé, duchesse du Maine, the granddaughter of the infamous *frondeur*, the *Grand Condé*.

Responding to Joan DeJean's characterization of the Fronde as "a woman's war," Anne Duggan cautions historians about analyzing the political and military actions of the *frondeuses* exclusively through the lens of gender.¹⁵ "Similarly," Duggan adds, "we must also ask ourselves to what extent a particular woman author writes as a woman, and perhaps this demands that we begin to think of women not in terms of radical otherness, but rather as existing within a tension between the same and other, as each woman author negotiates her relationship to her gender as well as to her literary tradition, social class, and national identity."¹⁶ The women examined in the following chapters, like the women authors studied by Duggan, were shaped by a multitude of shared social, cultural, historical, and political conditions outside of their gender. Each was born in Paris during the seventeenth century, was issued from illustrious noble and princely lineages, and belonged to families who fought against the crown during the Fronde, a shared social, political, and dynastic identity that saw their families defeated and humiliated at the hands of the French monarchical state. Thus, it could be argued that, by framing this analysis of the political and cultural strategies pursued by the duchesse de Montpensier, the Duchess of Savoy, and the duchesse du Maine around the issue of women's subversion of patriarchal authority, this present study risks imposing a reductive and ahistorical interpretative framework on a field of historical inquiry that could be better examined through the lens of social, political, and dynastic identity.

¹⁵ DeJean, 37; Duggan, 19.

¹⁶ Duggan, 19.

The objective of this study, however, is not to establish whether sexual equality, proto-feminist ideology, or even gender identity were the principal factors influencing the oppositional political culture that will be examined in the following chapters. Rather, this thesis will approach the issue of gender with the use of methodological tools derived from the field of cultural history, most notably by such scholars as Peter Burke and Joan Scott. In her now seminal article, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” Scott argues that, in order to understand masculinity’s enduring association with power, the historian must “[pay] attention to symbolic systems, that is, to the ways societies represent gender, use it to articulate the rules of social relationships, or construct the meaning of experience.”¹⁷ In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French society, power, as it was constructed and exhibited in the representational public sphere, found its symbolic expression in the masculine domain of kingship. This patriarchal construction of royal sovereignty was then reinforced through political and judicial discourse (the Salic Law), theology and moral philosophy, social and family hierarchies, and cultural symbols of masculine authority. By examining how these “symbolic systems” of patriarchal authority were articulated through the hegemonic cultural production of Louis XIV’s reign, and ultimately subverted through the visual, literary, and ceremonial culture developed by the duchesse de Montpensier, the Duchess of Savoy, and the duchesse du Maine, this thesis will show how the daughters and granddaughters of the Fronde

¹⁷ Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1063.

challenged the gendered construction of French political authority and, in turn, created a symbolic language with which to represent political authority *au féminin*.

CHAPTER I

Anne Marie Louise d'Orléans, duchesse de Montpensier: *une Amazone Moderne*

On July 2, 1652, the French royal army entered Paris to put down the rebel forces of the leading *frondeur*, Louis II de Bourbon, Prince de Condé. As the royal troops drew closer to the rebels, the thirteen-year-old Louis XIV and his ministers heard the sound of gunfire emanating from the fortress of the Bastille. “Good, they are firing at the enemy,” Cardinal Mazarin assured the king.¹⁸ When it became apparent that the rebel troops of the prince de Condé were, in fact, not the target of the gunfire, the king’s aides remained optimistic. “Perhaps,” one of them suggested, “Mademoiselle has gone to the Bastille, and they have fired a salute.”¹⁹ This optimism was quickly dashed, however, once the king and his entourage learned that the guns of the Bastille were firing on the royal troops. “If it is Mademoiselle,” the maréchal de Villeroy retorted, “it will be she who has made them fire at us.”²⁰ The maréchal de Villeroy was correct; Mademoiselle had indeed ordered the governor of the Bastille to fire on the king’s troops, allowing the Prince de Condé to make his escape.

Known to her contemporaries as *la Grande Mademoiselle*, the woman responsible for the artillery strike on the French royal army was none other than Louis XIV’s first-

¹⁸ “Bon, ils tirent sur les ennemis!” Anne Marie Louise d'Orléans, duchesse de Montpensier, *Mémoires de Mlle de Montpensier, petite-fille de Henri IV*, ed. A. Chérueil (Paris, 1858-1868), 2:115.”

¹⁹ “C'est peut-être Mademoiselle qui est allée à la Bastille, et l'on a tiré à son arrivée.” Ibid.

²⁰ “Si c'est Mademoiselle, ce sera elle qui aura fait tirer sur nous.” Ibid.

cousin, Anne Marie Louise d'Orléans, duchesse de Montpensier (fig. 1). Along with the duchesse de Chevreuse and the duchesse de Longueville, the duchesse de Montpensier was one of the most important women of the Fronde, a *frondeuse* whose reputation as a military leader led the maréchal de Villeroy to immediately anticipate her involvement in the artillery attack. Born on May 29, 1627 under the reign of Louis XIII, Anne Marie Louise d'Orléans was the eldest daughter of the king's younger brother, Gaston d'Orléans, and the only child of Gaston's first wife, Marie de Bourbon, duchesse de Montpensier, who died just six days after their daughter's birth. As the only niece of Louis XIII, Anne Marie Louise d'Orléans was initially addressed by courtiers as *Mademoiselle* until Gaston d'Orléans fathered a second *Mademoiselle* with his new wife, Marguerite de Lorraine, in 1645. To distinguish Anne Marie Louise from her half-sister, contemporaries would henceforth address the duchess as the Grande Mademoiselle. Before she had even learned to crawl, *la Grande Mademoiselle's* future marriage prospects had become an issue of great political and diplomatic importance for the French crown. Not only was the duchesse de Montpensier the granddaughter of the first Bourbon king of France, Henri IV—an illustrious ancestry that made her one of the highest-ranking noblewomen in the kingdom—but she was also the sole heir to her late mother's vast estates, through which she inherited the titles of princesse de Dombes, princesse daupine d'Auvergne, comtesse d'Eu, and duchesse de Montpensier, among others. These titles were not only prestigious, but also extremely lucrative, earning the young princess an annual income of 500,000 livres.²¹ As potential suitors both within and

²¹ *Ibid.*, 3:537.



Figure 1. *Anne Marie Louise d'Orléans, duchesse de Montpensier.* Attributed to Gilbert de Sève. ca. 1660-1670. Oil on canvas. Musée des châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles, France. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

outside of France were keenly aware, the future husband of the Grande Mademoiselle would not only secure a marital alliance with one of the most powerful ruling families, but would also gain access to the personal fortune of the richest heiress in Europe. One possible marriage candidate was the duchesse de Montpensier's first cousin, Louis, who, following the death of Louis XIII in 1643, ascended to the throne as Louis XIV.²²

It is difficult to determine whether this proposed marital union between the duchesse de Montpensier and Louis XIV was treated with any seriousness by the king's mother and her chief minister, Cardinal Mazarin. By the early seventeenth century, it had become common practice for the French king or heir apparent (*le dauphin*) to wed a foreign princess, as Louis XIV would eventually do with his marriage to the Spanish *infanta*, Maria Theresa, in 1661. In any event, by 1646, the now nineteen-old-year duchesse de Montpensier had her eyes set on a different husband: the Holy Roman Emperor, Ferdinand III. In the duchess's own memoirs, which she began to compose in 1653, we learn that Montpensier's desire to marry Emperor Ferdinand was based, not on any feelings of affection or attraction, but on her own political ambition. "The desire of being Empress followed me everywhere," wrote Montpensier, "and the accomplishment of it appearing to be so near, I thought it desirable that I should, even now, begin to adopt the customs, that might suit the temperament of the emperor."²³ Yet, in the first of many

²² Joan DeJean, introduction to *Against Marriage: The Correspondence of La Grande Mademoiselle*, by Anne Marie Louise d'Orléans, Duchesse de Montpensier, trans. and ed. Joan DeJean (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 5.

²³ ". . . le désir d'être impératrice, qui me suivoit partout, et dont l'effet me paroissoit toujours proche, me faisoit penser qu'il étoit bon que je prisse par avance les habitudes, qui pouvoient être conformes à l'humeur de l'empereur." Montpensier, *Mémoires*, 1:145.

conflicts that would play out over the course of her life, Mademoiselle's desire to choose her own husband and control her destiny would be met with strong resistance from the patriarchal social, political, and family structures that governed most all aspects of life for women in seventeenth-century France. Refusing to assist his daughter in brokering a marriage with Emperor Ferdinand, Gaston d'Orléans would, instead, plot with Cardinal Mazarin to arrange a marriage between the duchesse de Montpensier and Charles Stuart, son of the defeated—and soon to be beheaded—king of England, Charles I. With the English monarchy effectively abolished and the Parliamentarians in firm control of his former kingdom, Charles Stuart, who continued to use his former title, Prince of Wales, was living in exile with his mother, Henrietta Maria, at the French court, where the landless prince hoped to gain assistance in restoring his father to the throne. From the French crown's perspective, a marital alliance between Charles Stuart and the duchesse de Montpensier would allow the Stuart claimant to use his new wife's immense personal fortune—rather than the French kingdom's coffers—to finance his restoration campaign, a campaign that, if successful, could bring about an English regime more favorable to French interests.²⁴ For the duchesse de Montpensier, however, an exiled prince with no kingdom or crown was not worthy of her hand in marriage, and most certainly had no right to squander her fortune. “The idea of an empire so much occupied my mind,” the duchess wrote, “that I only looked on the Prince of Wales as an object of pity.”²⁵ In 1648, the duchess's path to the imperial throne was permanently blocked when news of

²⁴ DeJean, introduction to *Against Marriage*, 6.

²⁵ “. . . la pensée de l'empire occupoit si fort mon esprit, que je ne regardois plus le prince de Galles que comme un objet de pitié.” Montpensier, *Mémoires*, 1:140.

Ferdinand III's marriage to archduchess Maria Leopoldine reached the French court. Despite this setback, the duchesse de Montpensier remained unyielding in her refusal to wed Charles Stuart. Over the next forty-seven years of her life, the duchesse de Montpensier would continue to oppose the patriarchal authority of the French state, challenging anyone, including the king, who would stand in the way of her elusive empire—an empire that would never cease to occupy her mind.

If the “idea of an empire” continued to preoccupy the duchesse de Montpensier, she knew this imperial objective could not be achieved within her native France. Unlike many other European kingdoms, like England and Spain, where women, though subordinate to men in the line of succession, could legally reign as sovereigns, the French kingdom observed a law of succession that not only barred female claimants from ascending to the throne, but also excluded male aspirants whose royal pedigree was not transmitted through a paternal line.²⁶ The exclusion of women from the French line of royal succession was upheld by French jurists as a central tenet of Salic Law, the sixth-century legal code devised by the Salian Franks. Yet, as scholars like Sarah Hanley have demonstrated, there is no evidence that such a law on female exclusion was ever practiced by either the Merovingian or Carolingian Franks, nor even by the Capetian kings of France.²⁷ It was not until the fourteenth century, some 800 years after the Salian

²⁶ Sarah Hanley, “The Family, the State, and the Law in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France: The Political Ideology of Male Right versus an Early Theory of Natural Rights,” *Journal of Modern History* 78, no. 2 (June 2006): 307.

²⁷ Sarah Hanley, “Identity Politics and Rulership in France: Female Political Place and the Fraudulent Salic Law in Christine de Pizan and Jean de Montreuil,” in *Changing Identities in Early Modern France*, ed. Michael Wolfe (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 79-80.

law code was first formulated, that the Salic Law was first cited in the context of female succession. Appearing in a manuscript authored by French historiographer Richard Lescot in 1358, this reference to an ancient Salic Law precluding women from reigning or transmitting succession rights was produced in response to the dynastic disputes that had sparked the Hundred Years' War between England and France.²⁸ As a royal historiographer, Lescot was commissioned to legitimize the succession of Jean II, whose claim to the French throne was threatened by two rival claimants, Edward III of England and Charles II of Navarre. Unlike Jean II, a member of the nascent Valois dynasty, Edward III and Charles II both descended directly from the royal house of Capet, and therefore held a stronger claim to the French throne—Edward as the grandson of Philip IV, and Charles as the grandson of Louis X. By citing the existence of a sixth-century Salian law precluding the transmission of succession rights via maternal descent, Lescot and his royal patron could justify the ascendance of the Valois kings by nullifying the competing claims advanced by Edward III and Charles II, whose Capetian ancestry derived from their respective mothers, Isabelle of France and Jeanne II.²⁹

When Lescot made use of the Salic Law in 1358, his principal objective was not to bar women from participating in government, but rather to legitimize the sovereignty of his Valois patron. By the fifteenth century, however, the Salic Law had undergone a transformation from an obscure political expedient to a legal justification for the

²⁸ Richard Lescot, *Genealogia aliquorum regum Francie per quam apparet quantum attinere potest regi Francie rex Navarre*, in *Chronique de Richard Lescot, religieux de Saint-Denis (1328-1344)*, ed. Jean Lemoine (Paris, 1896), 173-178.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

exclusion of women from all domains of political life. As Sarah Hanley has observed, this transformation unfolded, not in the political sphere, but within the confines of a literary debate known as the *Querelle de la Rose*.³⁰ At the center of this debate was the popular thirteenth-century poem, *Le Roman de la Rose*, composed by Guillaume de Lorris around 1230 and greatly expanded several decades later by Jean de Meun. The *querelle* was instigated more than a century later when, sometime around 1401, the French scholar and *prévôt* of Lille, Jean de Montreuil, wrote a commentary on the *Roman de la Rose* in which he praised Jean de Meun's subsequent additions to de Lorris's original work. While Montreuil's encomium does not survive, the responses it elicited from his contemporaries reveal that much of his praise was focused on the poem's depiction of women, whom de Meun presented as innately wicked, dishonest, and foolish.³¹ One particularly critical response to this commentary was penned by the Venetian-born writer Christine de Pizan, who came across Montreuil's encomium while serving as court poet to Charles VI of France. In June 1401, Christine de Pizan wrote a letter directly to Montreuil in which she argued that the *Roman de la Rose* was undeserving of his praise, citing a litany of vulgar, misogynistic, and immoral passages from de Meun's text to support her critical position. Reproaching de Meun for his portrayal of women as deceitful and unintelligent whores (*pustes*), Christine de Pizan's

³⁰ Ibid., 80-84.

³¹ David F. Hult, introduction to *Debate of the Romance of the Rose*, by Christine de Pizan et al., trans. and ed. David F. Hult (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010, 12-13.

letter to Montreuil argues that it is dishonorable men like de Meun, and not the women he accuses, who lack honesty and intelligence:

But if [de Meun], venturing so far beyond the bounds of reason, took it upon himself to accuse women or judge them erroneously, blame should be imputed not to them but rather to the person who tells lies at such a distance from the truth and so lacking in credibility, inasmuch as the opposite is patently evident. For even if he and all his accomplices had solemnly sworn that this was the truth, may it not distress any of them when I declare that there already have been, are, and will be many women more worthy, more honorable, better trained, and even more learned, and from whom greater good has resulted in the world than ever he accomplished in his person.³²

As evidence of women's capacity to surpass men like de Meun in such domains as morality, learning, and governance, Christine de Pizan's letter would go on to provide examples of extraordinary women from both biblical and modern French history, women whose acts of leadership, bravery, and even martial violence have rivaled the exploits of history's greatest kings.³³

Although there is no evidence that Montreuil ever responded to Christine directly, this initially private correspondence would turn into a public debate—the *Querelle de la Rose*—after Christine presented her written exchanges with Montreuil and other prominent admirers of the *Roman de la Rose* to the queen of France, Isabeau de Bavière. In her initial letter to Montreuil, Christine de Pizan had limited her list of learned and politically engaged women to nine names, omitting "numerous others about whom it

³² "Toutes estes, serez et fustes / de fet ou de volenté pustes." *Le Roman de la Rose*, vv. 9125-26; Christine de Pizan to Jean de Montreuil, June-July 1401, in Pizan, *Debate of the Roman de la Rose*, 58.

³³ The great women cited in Pizan's letter included: (from the Old Testament) Sarah, Rebecca, Esther and Judith, and (from modern French history) Queen Jeanne, Queen Blanche, the duchess of Orleans, and the duchess of Anjou. Christine de Pizan to Jean de Montreuil, June-July 1401, in Pizan, *Debate of the Roman de la Rose*, 59.

would take too long to say any more.”³⁴ Four years later, however, as the focus of the *querelle* shifted from assessing the morality of de Meun’s text to debating the moral and intellectual capacities of women in general, Christine de Pizan compiled a much larger list of learned, virtuous, and politically shrewd women in what would become her most well-known literary work, *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames*. Over the course of the *Livre*, Christine de Pizan is visited by three female allegories of virtue—Lady Reason, Lady Rectitude, and Lady Justice—who assist Christine in building an ideal community of women, the *cit  des dames*, by invoking the achievements of extraordinary women throughout history. The virtues of these women—more than 150 in all—provide the moral foundations of Christine’s ideal city, a literary monument constructed to refute claims made by Montreuil and other defenders of the *Roman de la Rose* about women’s innate intellectual and political limitations. Set, not inside a convent, but within an urban center, Christine’s *cit * is also a political space in which women are empowered to participate in government. Thus, as Christine sets out to build the ideal government for her *cit  des dames*, Lady Reason provides her with numerous examples of women who served as exemplary rulers, from the ancient Amazonian queen Hippolyta to the thirteenth-century French regent, Blanche de Castille.³⁵

In response to Christine de Pizan’s *Livre de la Cit  des Dames*, Montreuil circulated a text of his own entitled *A toute la chevalerie* (To All the Knighthood). Completed in 1413, Montreuil’s *A toute la chevalerie*, as Sarah Hanley has noted, was

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Christine de Pizan, *La Cit  des Dames*, trans. Eric Hicks and Th r se Moreau (Paris: Stock, 1986), bk 1, xiii-xviii.

the first text to invoke the Salic Law for the express purpose of justifying the exclusion of women from all areas of political life.³⁶ Unlike Lescot's use of the Salic Law, however, Montreuil's 1413 text included passages that he claimed to have copied directly from the original Salian document, passages that unequivocally called for the exclusion of women from the royal succession.³⁷ Montreuil's transcription of the Salic law, however, was a brazen forgery, a fact that became apparent to French jurists as early as the sixteenth century when an authentic copy of the Salic laws of succession was identified, proving Montreuil's deception.³⁸ Despite this discovery, however, the Salic law would continue to be cited as a judicial justification for the exclusion of women from the French royal succession. Indeed, more than two centuries after Christine de Pizan had decried the exclusion of women from political life in her *Cité des dames*, the Salic Law would stand in the way of the political ambitions of another great French author, the duchesse de Montpensier.

In November 1658, the thirty-one-year-old duchesse de Montpensier accompanied her cousin, Louis XIV, and other members of the court as they travelled to the French city of Dijon. A few weeks earlier, the Parlement of Dijon, one of the French kingdom's thirteen appellate courts, had sent a remonstrance to the king, informing the crown of the magistrates' refusal to register a series of new tax increases requested by

³⁶ Hanley, "Identity Politics," 80-81.

³⁷ Jean de Montreuil, *Opera*, ed. Ezio Ornato, Nicole Pons, and Gilbert Ouy (Turin: G. Giappichelli, 1975), 2:7-17.

³⁸ Hanley, "The Family, the State, and the Law," 291.

Mazarin.³⁹ Upon arriving in Dijon, Louis XIV held a *lit de justice*, a ritual of monarchical authority in which the king would appear before the Parlement, seated on a dais, and force the magistrates to register the edicts in question. Only a few years removed from the Fronde *parlementaire*, when the French monarchy's attempts at curtailing the authority of the courts had led the Parlements of Paris, Bordeaux, Rouen, and Aix to rebel against the crown, Louis XIV had come to impose his will on the Burgundian magistrates. Amidst this display of absolutist kingship, the duchesse de Montpensier was approached by Nicolas Brulart, the president of the Parlement of Dijon. When she later recounted this interaction in her memoirs, Montpensier recalled: “[the president Brulart] told me that if I had been around during the same time as those who created the Salic Law, or if they could have foreseen that France would one day have a princess like me, they would have never made [the Salic law], or at least they would have made an exception in my case.”⁴⁰ Though unable to undo the patriarchal legacy of the Salic Law, the president's remarks reveal that, by 1658, political figures from French cities as far flung as Dijon, roughly 300 kilometers away from Paris, were aware of the Grande Mademoiselle's reputation as a skilled political leader. This reputation, cemented during the Fronde by her opening fire on the royal army from the fortress of the Bastille, was

³⁹ Michael P. Breen, *Law, City, and King: Legal Culture, Municipal Politics, and State Formation in Early Modern Dijon* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2007), 181.

⁴⁰ “. . . il me dit que si j'eusse été du temps de ceux qui avoient fait la loi salique, ou qu'ils eussent pu prévoir que la France eût eu une princesse telle que moi, on ne l'auroit jamais faite, ou que du moins on l'auroit supprimée en ma faveur.” Montpensier, *Mémoires*, 3:295.

also based on the visual and literary representations of the duchesse de Montpensier that had begun to circulate during the rebellion.

Although the Fronde would ultimately prove unsuccessful as a political and military campaign, the visual and literary culture that the conflict inspired would provide women like the duchesse de Montpensier with an alternative mode of monarchical opposition. Over the course of the conflict, supporters of the *frondeurs* printed and disseminated thousands of political pamphlets known as *libelles*, employing the satirical, and often bawdy, language of the burlesque literary genre to defame partisans of the royal government.⁴¹ The most common genre of *libelles* were the so-called *mazarinades*, satirical pamphlets attacking the *frondeurs*' most despised adversary, chief minister Cardinal Mazarin. Indeed, while attacking the authority of the French monarchical state, the *frondeurs* and their pamphleteering supporters seldom targeted the person of the king, Louis XIV, who, as an adolescent boy, was often portrayed in pamphlets as a victim of the corrupt machinations of his promiscuous Spanish mother and her contemptible Italian lover, Mazarin.⁴² These vicious *libelles* directed against the royal government were by no means an unprecedented phenomenon in the history of French political culture. During the last decades of the sixteenth century, for instance, Henri III's negotiations with Huguenot leaders triggered what Robert Darnton has described as an "explosion" of *libelles* attacking the king and his supporters by pamphleteers sympathetic to the cause of

⁴¹ Perez Zagorin, *Rebels and Rulers, 1500-1660* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 2:203.

⁴² See Jeffrey Merrick, "The cardinal and the queen: Sexual and political disorders in the Mazarinades," *French Historical Studies* 18 (1994): 667-699.

the *Sainte Ligue*.⁴³ In these earlier *libelles* produced during the turbulent decades of the French Wars of Religion, women also figured as recurring characters. More than seventy years before the pamphleteers of the Fronde would attack the legitimacy and queenly virtue of the regent, Anne of Austria, in pornographic *libelles* describing sordid sexual encounters between the queen mother and Cardinal Mazarin, an anonymous *libelliste* had penned a misogynistic tirade against another queen regent of France, Catherine de' Medici. Composed in 1574, the *libelle* presents Catherine de' Medici as the latest in a long line of women regents whose plot to "usurp the government" inevitably resulted in the "ruin of the state," an ignominious succession of queen regents whose failures the author cites as historical evidence of women's inability to govern.⁴⁴

While the pornographic *libelles* directed against Anne of Austria show that this misogynistic genre persisted well beyond the turn of the seventeenth century, the political pamphlets produced during the Fronde were also to feature politically engaged women, like the duchesse de Montpensier, as its chief protagonists, placing the *frondeuses* at the center of a new political culture of monarchical opposition. One of the first *mazarinades* to feature a female protagonist appeared in 1649, as the first phase of the Fronde, the Fronde parlementaire, was drawing to a close. The pamphlet, entitled *L'Amazone française au secours des Parisiens, ou l'Approche des troupes de Madame la Duchesse de Chevreuse*, is at once an attack on Cardinal Mazarin and a panegyric celebrating one

⁴³ Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 204.

⁴⁴ *Discours merveilleux sur la vie, actions et déportements de Catherine de Medicis, Royné Mere. Declarant tous les moyens qu'elle a tenu pour usurper le Gouvernement du Royaume de France et ruyner l'estat d'iceluy* (Paris, 1650), 3.

of the Fronde's first female belligerents, the French noblewoman, Marie de Rohan-Montbazon, duchesse de Chevreuse (fig. 2). When the first phase of the Fronde erupted in 1648 between the magistrates of the Parlements and the royal government, the forty-eight-year-old duchesse de Chevreuse was living in exile across France's northern border in the imperial prince-bishopric of Liège. Like her younger *frondeuse* counterpart, the duchesse de Montpensier, the duchesse de Chevreuse held political ambitions that French legal and social conventions made impossible to fulfill in any official capacity. Despite these structural obstacles, the duchesse de Chevreuse came to occupy a position of minor political importance as a young noblewoman at the court of Louis XIII, both by securing a position in the queen's household and by establishing strategic relationships, both sexual and platonic, with influential figures at court.⁴⁵ After the death of Louis XIII in 1643, however, the ascendance of Anne of Austria as regent of France presented the duchesse de Chevreuse with an opportunity to bypass the patriarchal barriers to female political participation by installing herself as the regent's most trusted advisor. Yet, besides the obvious issue of Anne of Austria's existing distrust of the duchesse de Chevreuse, the queen-regent had already acquired such a trusted advisor, the chief minister Cardinal Mazarin. To counter the cardinal's influence over the regent, the duchesse de Chevreuse joined a strategic alliance with a group of fellow nobles, including several noblewomen, forming a court faction that became known as *les Importants* (the Importants).⁴⁶ Together, the duchesse de Chevreuse and *les Importants*

⁴⁵ Treasure, 66.

⁴⁶ Ibid.



Figure 2. *Portrait of Marie de Rohan, duchesse de Chevreuse as Diana the Huntress.* Attributed to Claude Déruet. ca. 1627. Oil on canvas. Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles, France. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

devised a drastic plan—a plan to assassinate Cardinal Mazarin. It was because of her involvement in this ultimately unsuccessful assassination plot that the duchesse de Chevreuse found herself in exile at the start of the Fronde in 1648. The following year, as Cardinal Mazarin ordered thousands of mercenaries to siege the Parlement-held city of Paris, the legend of the duchesse de Chevreuse and her conspiracy to murder the now reviled cardinal-minister would lead a pamphleteer to laud the duchess as “the French Amazon coming to the rescue of Parisians.”⁴⁷

These words of praise come from the title of a *mazarinade*, *L'amazone française au secours des Parisiens, ou l'approche des troupes de Mme la duchesse de Chevreuse* (The French Amazon coming to the rescue of Parisians, or the approach of the troops of Madame the duchesse de Chevreuse). Whereas the duchesse de Chevreuse had been exiled from court society due to her involvement in a political conspiracy, in this *mazarinade*, the duchess's reputation for political violence is instead glorified in laudatory prose. The pamphleteer begins his brief text with conventional formulas of feminine praise inherited from French courtly literature, lauding the duchess for her physical as well as spiritual beauty: “the beauty of the body is often indicative of the beauty of the soul.”⁴⁸ The bulk of the pamphlet, however, praises the duchesse de Chevreuse for refusing to submit to tyrannical authority—“[she] has never wished to submit to tyranny”—and divines that the duchess will lead troops into France to defeat the armies loyal to Cardinal Mazarin, “forever [preserving] the memory and the glorious

⁴⁷ *L'amazone française au secours des Parisiens, ou l'approche des troupes de Mme la duchesse de Chevreuse* (Paris, 1649).

⁴⁸ “. . . la beauté du corps est souvent un indice de la beauté de l'âme.” *Ibid.*, 1.

name of this French amazon.”⁴⁹ By identifying the duchesse de Chevreuse as a “French amazon,” the pamphlet’s author had adapted an emerging literary trend into the political context of the Fronde, creating a potent symbol with which the women of the Fronde could articulate their political opposition to monarchical authority in contemporary visual and literary culture.

Depicted in numerous ancient Greek and Latin sources, including Homer’s *Illiad* and Herodotus’s *Histories*, the Amazons were believed to be an ancient society of female warriors famed for their skill in battle. Governed by a queen, the Amazons built an enduring social and political order composed exclusively of women, producing female warriors capable of defeating large armies of men. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the Amazons were cited in Christine de Pizan’s *Livre de la Cité des Dames* as a historical example of women’s capacity for self-governance, rebuking the claims of early fifteenth-century writers like Jean de Montreuil arguing for the exclusion of women from political life. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as scholars, artists, philologists, and writers presided over a great renewal of interest in the ancient world, legendary Amazons like Queen Hippolyta became increasingly popular subjects in European art and literature.⁵⁰ Yet, it was not until the 1640s that the figure of the Amazon was once again invoked in the ongoing French literary debate over the intellectual and moral status of women. Between 1642 and 1650, an extraordinary number of texts written in defense of

⁴⁹ “[elle] n’a jamais voulu plier sous la tyrannie.” / “les siècles à venir conservent à jamais la mémoire et le nom glorieux de cette amazone française.” Ibid.

⁵⁰ Margaret Franklin, “Boccaccio’s Amazons and their Legacy in Renaissance Art: Confronting the Threat of Powerful Women,” *Woman’s Art Journal* 31, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 2010): 13.

women's education and participation in political affairs were produced in France by both male and female authors.⁵¹ While different in format and structure, these texts are consistent in identifying what Derval Conroy terms "the dynamics of male hegemony" as the greatest obstacle to women's entry into political life.⁵² To prove this thesis, a number of these authors supplemented their texts with examples of women from history whose achievements as rulers or warriors surpassed those of their male counterparts. For writers like Jacques Du Bosc, author of the 1645 tract *La Femme heroique, ou Les Heroines comparées avec les heros en toute sorte de vertus*, the exclusively female society of the Amazons provided a historical, or perhaps more properly mytho-historical, case study of women's capacity to rule beyond the masculine hegemonic domain of seventeenth-century France. "We see the Empire of the Amazons described by Justin," writes Du Bosc, "with their valor, their drills, and their conquests, and then we will see that nature produces Heroines in just as great a number as Heroes."⁵³ Referencing the historical account of the Amazons recorded by the Roman historian, Justin, Du Bosc grounds his treatise on female heroism in the writings of the ancient world.

Du Bosc's focus on heroines from antiquity would be seen in another *mazarinade* written in praise of the duchesse de Chevreuse. Composed in 1649, the same year as *L'Amazone française au secours des Parisiens*, this anonymous pamphlet, *L'illustre*

⁵¹ Derval Conroy, *Government, Virtue, and the Female Prince in Seventeenth-Century France*, vol. 1 of *Ruling Women* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 47-48.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 48.

⁵³ ". . . on voye l'Empire des Amazones qui est décrit dans Justin, avec leurs vaillance, leurs exercices, & leurs conquestes; & l'on verra que la nature donne des Heroïnes en aussi grand nombre que des Heros." Jacques du Bosc, *La Femme Heroique, ou les heroines comparées avec les heros en toute sorte de vertus* (Paris, 1645), 336.

Conquerante ou la genereuse constance de Madame de Chevreuse (The Illustrious Conqueress or the generous constancy of Madame de Chevreuse), portrays the duchess as a powerful warrior and military leader by comparing her to the Amazonian queen, Penthesilea. “I imagine seeing her as another Penthesilea,” writes the pamphleteer, “appearing among the squadrons.”⁵⁴ Yet, unlike Du Bosc’s text, the author of this *mazarinade* does not limit his list of heroic women to figures from ancient and biblical history, declaring that the duchesse de Chevreuse will expel France’s enemies “like another Joan of Arc.”⁵⁵ By invoking the example of Joan of Arc, whose military leadership allowed the armies of Charles VII to retake Orléans during the Hundred Years’ War, the pamphleteer provided a temporal intermediary between the Amazons of antiquity and the duchesse de Chevreuse, the *amazone moderne*. This literary image of a historical succession of powerful women, extending from the ancient world into modern times, found its most influential expression in Pierre Le Moyne’s 1647 text, *La Galerie des Femmes Fortes* (The Gallery of Strong Women). Conceived as a literary ‘gallery’, Le Moyne’s text displays a chronological sequence of *femmes fortes* (strong women), beginning with Old Testament heroines like Judith and Jael and ending with women from recent history, including Joan of Arc and Marie Stuart. Each portrait featured in Le Moyne’s *Galerie* is used to address a different question concerning women’s competence in traditionally masculine fields. In one example, Le Moyne answers the first

⁵⁴ “Je m’imagine de la voir comme une autre Penthesilée, se fair jour parmy les escadrons.” *L’illustre Conquerante ou la genereuse constance de Madame de Chevreuse* (Paris, 1649), 6.

⁵⁵ “. . . comme une autre Jeanne Darcq [chassant] les Estrangers de la France.” Ibid.

question posed in his text—"If women are capable of governing"—by pointing to his portrait of the Old Testament prophetess Deborah, whose military leadership allowed the people of Israel to defeat the Canaanites.⁵⁶ As Deborah was called upon to lead her people by God, Le Moyne concludes that one cannot question women's ability to govern without also questioning God's judgement. Addressing the question of women's capacity for military virtue, Le Moyne refers the reader to his portrait of Zenobia, the third-century queen of Palmyra who conquered a substantial portion of the Eastern Roman Empire.⁵⁷ As further evidence of women's ability to excel in warfare, Le Moyne cites several examples of military women from recent French history, such as Joan of Arc and Catherine Lisse. "France," Le Moyne declares, "has had its Amazons just like Scythia and other nations overseas."⁵⁸ By referring to modern women like Joan of Arc as "Amazons", Le Moyne has separated the image of the Amazonian warrior from the mytho-historical context found in earlier sources like Du Bosc's *Femme héroïque*. Thus, in Le Moyne's *Gallerie*, the term Amazon no longer referred exclusively to individual Amazonian women like Penthesilea or Hippolyta, but instead had come to embody the political, moral, and military virtues of all *femmes fortes*. In the *mazarinades* that circulated during the Fronde, the names of *frondeuses* like the duchesse de Chevreuse and, as we will see, the duchesse de Montpensier would be exalted as modern Amazons, adding their portraits to Le Moyne's gallery of *femmes fortes*.

⁵⁶ "Si les Femmes sont capables de gouverner." Pierre Le Moyne, *La Gallerie des Femmes Fortes* (Paris, 1647), 10.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 150-156.

⁵⁸ "La France a eu ses Amazones aussi bien que la Scythie & les autres Pays d'Outre-Mer." *Ibid.*, 156.

As word spread in the summer of 1652 that the king's cousin, the duchesse de Montpensier, had turned the canons of the Bastille against the royal troops, allowing the Grand Condé to make his escape, pamphleteers printed *mazarinades* celebrating the military exploits of this contemporary Amazon. In one of these *mazarinades*, a six-page poem entitled *Le bouquet de paille, dédié à Mademoiselle* (The Bundle of Straw, Dedicated to Mademoiselle), the duchesse de Montpensier is portrayed as a valorous Amazon who has come to save France from Cardinal Mazarin:

From France, beautiful Amazon
 Worthy of wearing the crown
 Of the empire and the entire world
 Who begins to punish
 By your valor second to none
 The author of all the evils of the world,
 Who with superhuman courage
 Carries your weapons and your hand
 Against this monster of nature,
 Mazarin heart of rot.⁵⁹

Evoking the militaristic attributes of the *femmes fortes* exhibited in Le Moyne's *Gallerie*, this poem was one of many *mazarinades* circulating in the last years of the Fronde to represent the duchesse de Montpensier as a modern Amazon capable of overthrowing the established monarchical order.⁶⁰ As Howard Brown has observed, the tendency for

⁵⁹ “De la France, belle Amazonne, / Digne de porter la Couronne, / De l'Empire & du monde entier, / Qui commences à chastier / Par ta vaillance sans seconde / L'Auther de tous les maux du monde, / Qui d'un courage plus qu'humain / Portes tes armes et ta main / Contre ce monstre de nature, / Mazarin coeur de pourriture.” *Le bouquet de paille, dédié à Mademoiselle* (Paris, 1652), 3.

⁶⁰ Joan DeJean, “Amazones, femmes fortes et frondeuses,” in *Femmes et littérature: Une histoire Culturelle*, ed. Martine Reid (Paris: Gallimard, 2020), 1:512-514. In addition to appearing as an Amazon, the Duchesse de Montpensier was also frequently identified in *mazarinades* with both Joan of Arc and Pallas/Minerva, the Greco-Roman goddess of

pamphleteers like the anonymous author of *Le bouquet de paille* to produce these texts quickly and at low cost meant that very few *mazarinades* included illustrations, limiting the pamphlets' audience to learned and literate consumers such as nobles and members of the legal profession.⁶¹ Yet, while illustrated pamphlets from the Fronde are indeed rare, among the few examples that have survived is an engraving of the Grande Mademoiselle, an important piece of pictorial evidence that allows us to examine how *frondeuses* like the duchesse de Montpensier were represented in the visual culture of the Fronde.

Produced by an unknown engraver to illustrate a now-lost pamphlet in 1652, the print, entitled *Vive le roy, point de Mazarin*, depicts the duchesse de Montpensier defending the city of Orléans from Cardinal Mazarin and the French army (fig. 3). As his troops flee the city in fear, Mazarin lies helplessly on his back, his arms outstretched in a gesture of surrender, and his cardinal's hat, a *zucchetto*, tossed on the ground beside him.

Accompanied by two female warriors, the duchesse de Montpensier attacks the cardinal's recumbent body with a blazing torch while two *putti* fly overhead, carrying a crown of laurels and the duchess's coat of arms. Unlike the figure of Mazarin or the figures of

wisdom and military strategy; see, for example, *Le Triomphe des Merites de Mademoiselle* (Paris, 1652), 3-8.

⁶¹ Howard G. Brown, *Mass Violence and the Self: From the French Wars of Religion to the Paris Commune* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), 88. Although literacy rates in seventeenth-century France were only at roughly 25 percent for men and 10 percent for women, the work of Roger Chartier and Jeffrey K. Sawyer has shown that it was common for pamphlets to be read aloud and discussed within communal spaces, allowing France's illiterate majority to access the contents of these political tracts. See Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 2-9; and Jeffrey K. Sawyer, *Printed Poison: Pamphlet Propaganda, Faction Politics, and the Public Sphere in Early Seventeenth-Century France* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 67-69.

soldiers in the background of the print, who are depicted in contemporary dress, the duchesse de Montpensier and her two female accomplices are dressed *à l'antique*, with plumed helmets, caligae, and cuirasses worn over long flowing chitons. Like the pamphleteers of the Fronde, the designer of this print presented the duchesse de Montpensier as a powerful military leader by identifying the *frondeuse* with female warriors from antiquity. Rather than appearing as a modern incarnation of one specific historical forebear, the iconographic representation of the duchess combines the attributes of multiple mytho-historical figures, including the torch of Bellona, the shield of Minerva, and the laurel wreath of Victoria. By representing the duchesse de Montpensier as the leader of a small army of women, however, the engraver also sought to identify his female protagonist as a modern Amazon, echoing the literary tradition of Le Moyne's *Gallerie des Femmes Fortes* and pamphlets like *Le bouquet de paille*. While Jane Kromm has argued that these symbols of female militarism were intended to mock Cardinal Mazarin "at Montpensier's expense," portraying his defeat at the hands of a woman as a form of emasculation, this reading underplays the political legitimacy that women like the Grande Mademoiselle had managed to secure amongst their male and female supporters by embodying the heroic ethos of the Amazons.⁶² Drawing from a variety of visual and literary sources, the print's seemingly heterogenous iconographical schema is, instead, indicative of the engraver's attempt at translating the literary tradition of the *Amazonne moderne* into a new pictorial language.

⁶² Jane Kromm, "The Bellona Factor: Political Allegories and the Conflicting Claims of Martial Imagery," in *Early Modern Visual Allegory: Embodying Meaning*, ed. Cristelle Baskins and Lisa Rosenthal (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 195.



Figure 3. *Vive le Roy, Point de Mazarin*, satirical print depicting the duchesse de Montpensier, dressed as an amazon, attacking Cardinal Mazarin. ca. 1652. Engraving. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. Photo © Leonard de Selva / Bridgeman Images.

Although Amazonian queens like Hippolyta had appeared in French literary works since the early fifteenth century, there was no established iconographical tradition of representing the figure of the Amazon in French visual art prior to the seventeenth century.⁶³ Such a visual tradition had, however, developed south of the Alps, particularly in the city of Florence. In the fifteenth century, Florentine artist Paolo Uccello painted his *Battle of Theseus and the Amazons*, a scene of Greco-Amazonian conflict, or *Amazonomachy*, popularized in late fourteenth-century Tuscany with the circulation of Boccaccio's book of illustrious women from antiquity, the *De Mulieribus Claris* (fig. 4).⁶⁴ Yet, like the German woodcuts that would illustrate the first printed editions of Boccaccio's *De Mulieribus Claris* in the last decades of the fifteenth century, Uccello's pictorial adaptation represented the warring Amazons in contemporary, rather than antique, military dress, replete with plate armor and sallet helmets.⁶⁵ With all conventional markers of the Amazons' gender dissimulated beneath their dark suits of armor, Uccello depicted a handful of figures in the foreground wearing silk dresses over their steel military garb, the only iconographic element that distinguishes the Amazons from their Greek counterparts. In the second half of the sixteenth century, however, another Florentine artist, Antonio Tempesta, would return to the subject of the *Amazonomachy* in a series of paintings and engravings. In Tempesta's treatment of the

⁶³ As discussed earlier in this chapter, Amazonian queens had appeared in Christine de Pizan's *Livre de la Cité des Dames* (1405). See also Jo Eldridge Carney, "Amazons," in *Encyclopedia of Women in the Renaissance: Italy, France, and England*, ed. Diana Robin, Anne R. Larsen, and Caroline Levin (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 2007), 6-8.

⁶⁴ Franklin, 13-14.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

theme, the Amazons wear billowing robes beneath their antique armor and helmets positioned to reveal their facial features and long flowing hair (fig. 5). The iconographical schema that Tempesta adopted in his representation of the Amazon figure shares numerous similarities with sixteenth-century Dutch and Flemish depictions of Minerva, Roman goddess of wisdom and military strategy, such as the two figures' tight-fitting cuirasses, flowing chitons, plumed helmets, and shields. During his early years in Florence, Tempesta had completed his artistic training under Jan van der Straet, a Flemish-born painter and engraver whose 1594 drawing of Minerva betrays many of these shared iconographic characteristics seen in Tempesta's Amazon figures (fig. 6). Whereas Uccello's Amazons had been faceless and genderless knights on the battlefield, Tempesta drew upon the iconographical tradition of representing Minerva as a woman of war to depict his Amazons as unmistakably female incarnations of divine wisdom and military prowess.

After achieving professional success in Florence, Antonio Tempesta moved to Rome, where, sometime around 1612, he took on a young pupil by the name of Claude Déruet. Born in 1588, Déruet would spend several years in Rome working alongside Tempesta until his return to his birthplace of Nancy in 1621.⁶⁶ While still in Rome, Déruet painted an Amazonomachy scene using many of the same iconographical elements developed by his teacher Tempesta, the first of many Amazon paintings that

⁶⁶ Per Bjurström, *The Art of Drawing in France, 1400-1900: Drawings from the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm* (London: Sotheby's Publications, 1987), 38.



Figure 4. *The Battle of Greeks and Amazons before the Walls of Troy.* Paolo Uccello. ca. 1460. Tempera on panel. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT. Public Domain. Photo credit: Yale University Art Gallery.



Figure 5. *The Battle Between the Greeks and the Amazons.* Antonio Tempesta. 1600. Etching. Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA. Credit line: Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts. © 2022 Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. www.famsf.org



Figure 6. *Minerva, or "Arma" (Allegory of the Art of War)*, plate 2 in the *Schema, seu Speculum Principum (Skills of a Prince)* series. Jan van der Straet, called Stradanus. 1597. Engraving on paper. Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, New York. Public domain. Credit line: Museum purchase through gift of Frederick Formes Horter.

Dérueet would complete over the course of his artistic career.⁶⁷ Following his return to Nancy, then the capital of the semi-autonomous duchy of Lorraine, Dérueet would paint a variety of different scenes of Amazons for the Duchess of Lorraine, Margherita Gonzaga. During their time in Rome, Dérueet and his mentor Tempesta had painted Amazonian battle scenes that largely adhered to the accounts relayed in Virgil's *Aeneid* and later in Boccaccio's *De Mulieribus Claris*, sources that recounted the violent defeat of the Amazons at the hands of Greek men. In the paintings he would later create for the Duchess of Lorraine, however, Dérueet shows his Amazons in triumphant scenes of military victory or post-combat celebration. In one of these paintings made for the Duchess of Lorraine in the mid 1620s, *The Triumph of the Amazons* (fig. 7), a group of Amazon warriors ride triumphantly on horseback as three male soldiers lay slain over their fallen horses. In a later example of this triumphant Amazonian imagery, a painting known as *The Banquet of the Amazons* (fig. 8), Dérueet has transported his cast of Amazon figures from the battlefield to the gardens of a sumptuous palace, where dozens of women are seen dancing, strolling, feasting, and playing musical instruments—a celebration of peace and abundance in an ideal society free from the destructive intrusion of men.

While the precise date of *The Banquet of the Amazons*' completion is not known for certain, Dérueet's painting of a prosperous and exclusively female realm set amidst gardens and a palatial complex bearing a striking resemblance to the ducal palace at

⁶⁷ François-Georges Pariset, "Les Amazones de Claude Dérueet," *Le Pays Lorrain* 37 (1956): 98.

Nancy suggests that the work may have been commissioned by Duchess Margherita Gonzaga's daughter and successor, Duchess Nicole of Lorraine, during her tenure as duchess regnant (between July 1624 and November 1625). When Henri II, duke of Lorraine, died on July 31, 1624, the late duke's only child, Nicole, established herself as his successor and the sole legitimate ruler of Lorraine, a duchy which, unlike the French kingdom, had never followed the tenet of female exclusion purportedly advocated by the Salic Law.⁶⁸ For Nicole of Lorraine, the female ruler of a small duchy threatened by the expansionist ambitions of men like France's chief minister, Cardinal Richelieu, Déruet's scenes of Amazon triumphs and banquets offered a utopian model of an independent gynocracy. After a little more than a year in power, however, Nicole of Lorraine's uncle conspired with the Estates General of Lorraine to void her succession rights and declare his son, Nicole's husband and first cousin, duke regnant. In spite of the short duration of her reign, however, the visual language of female authority codified through Déruet's paintings of Amazons for Duchess Margherita and Duchess Nicole at the court of Nancy would provide a pictorial model for representing women's political and military action during the Fronde.

In 1634, as the devastating Thirty Years War entered its sixteenth year, the French army took control of the duchy of Lorraine. Impressed by Déruet's work for the ducal court of Nancy, the favorite painter of Nicole of Lorraine was invited to Paris, where he

⁶⁸ Charles T. Lipp, *Noble Strategies in an Early Modern Small State: The Mahuet of Lorraine* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2011), 197n37.

would spend the next several years working at the French court.⁶⁹ In addition to completing portraits of the royal family, including a large equestrian portrait of Louis XIII and a portrait of the three-year-old Dauphin, the future Louis XIV, Déruet also received commissions from the king's brother, Gaston d'Orléans. As the daughter of Gaston d'Orléans, the duchesse de Montpensier would have certainly seen works by Déruet on display at her father's château de Blois, works that included a battle of the Amazons and the Greeks (fig. 9).⁷⁰ Déruet set his battle scene over a rocky bridge supported by two stone piers, and adorned the right pier with Gaston d'Orléans' own coat of arms—a detail that suggests that Déruet composed this Amazonomachy at the specific request of the duke of Orléans. Acquired by Gaston d'Orléans in the early 1630s, Déruet's vivid pictorial narrative depicting an army of women battling the exalted—and exclusively male—soldiers of ancient Greece would have accompanied the young duchesse de Montpensier throughout her childhood, serving, perhaps, as a symbol of resistance against the monarchical regime of Louis XIII. Indeed, Louis XIII, whose chief minister Cardinal Richelieu had removed Gaston d'Orléans from the royal council and forced him into exile at his château de Blois, had come to be identified by contemporaries with the illustrious Greek king and conqueror, Alexander the Great, an ancient Greek persona that would also be adopted by his son and successor, Louis XIV.⁷¹ Thus, when,

⁶⁹ Elise Goodman, “Minerva Revivified: Mademoiselle de Montpensier,” *Mediterranean Studies* 15 (2006): 88.

⁷⁰ Jean-Claude Boyer, “Une Académie Imparfait?,” in *République des Lettres, République des Arts: Mélanges en l'honneur de Marc Fumaroli*, ed. Christian Mouchel and Colette Nativel (Geneva, Switzerland: Librairie Droz, 2008), 57.

⁷¹ Such comparisons between Louis XIII and Alexander the Great became especially common after the Siege of La Rochelle in 1628. See for example, Louis Le Jau, sieur de



Figure 7. *Triumph of the Amazons.* Claude Déruet. 1620s. Oil on canvas. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Public Domain. Credit line: Bequest of Harry G. Sperling, 1971.

Boisminard, *Lettre envoyée et présentée au Roy , sur le rapport du siège de La Rochelle avec celui de la ville de Tyr assiégée et prise par Alexandre le Grand, Roy de Macédoine* (Paris, 1628).



Figure 8. *Banquet of the Amazons*. Claude Déruet. 1620s. Oil on canvas. Musée Lorrain, Palais des Ducs de Lorraine, Nancy, France. Public Domain. Photograph from François-Georges Pariset, "Les Amazones de Claude Déruet," *Le Pays Lorrain* 37 (1956): 97-114. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.



Figure 9. *Battle of the Amazons against the Greeks.* ca. 1630. Oil on canvas. Musée du Louvre, Paris. © 2010 RMN-Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre) / René-Gabriel Ojéda.
<https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010067557#>

two decades later, the duchesse de Montpensier took up arms in the fight against the centralizing reforms initiated under Richelieu and accelerated by Mazarin, the Amazonian iconography adopted in literary and visual representations of her actions in the Fronde would identify her, not only with the Amazons' femicentric political and military leadership, but also with their violent struggle against a hegemonic patriarchal state.

Although we do not know the name of the engraver who depicted the duchesse de Montpensier in the illustrated Mazarinade, *Vive le roy, point de Mazarin*, the presence of such intricate compositional and technical details as the heavy folds in the duchess's billowing robes, the elaborate ornamentation of her shield and cuirass, and the carefully rendered architectural features of the city of Orléans indicates that the engraving was composed by a highly skilled professional artist. Evincing an intimate knowledge of the Orléans cityscape, as well as a political allegiance to the duchesse de Montpensier and the Orléans clan, this anonymous printmaker was almost certainly familiar with the art collection of the city's titular duke, whose *Battle of the Amazons against the Greeks* by Déruet hung at the château de Blois, just half a day's journey from the city of Orléans. Like in Déruet's painting, the illustrated Mazarinade shows a group of women dressed in long flowing chitons and form-fitting antique cuirasses, donning crested helmets with elaborate plumage, brandishing shields embossed with the faces of lions or gorgons, and wielding weapons to slay their male opponents. However, in spite of the figures' antique costume and iconographical attributes invoking the Roman goddesses Bellona and Minerva, no contemporary viewer would confuse this print for an Amazonomachy or

other battle scene from Greek or Roman history. Thus, while Déruet's *Battle of the Amazons against the Greeks*, emblazoned with the coat of arms of Gaston d'Orléans, may have conveyed a subtle allegorical message about the growing tension between the duke of Orléans and his brother's chief minister Cardinal Richelieu, the engraving of the duchesse de Montpensier takes advantage of its informal medium to transgress the traditional boundaries separating the pictorial genres of history painting and portraiture. Set, not within an idealized ancient landscape, but at the city gates of Orléans in the year 1652, the print replaces the generic facial types of Déruet's ancient Amazons with the distinct likenesses of the duchesse de Montpensier and her fellow *frondeuses*, the countess of Fiesque and the countess of Frontenac, and substitutes the cowering figure of Mazarin for Déruet's fallen Greek soldier. Just as poetical *mazarinades* had praised the political and military virtues of the duchesse de Montpensier and the duchesse de Chevreuse by identifying the *frondeuses* with heroic women from ancient and modern history, so too would the engraver of this print extol the martial valor of the Grande Mademoiselle by creating her portrait in the guise of an Amazon. This visual adaptation of the literary tradition of allegorical portraiture would contribute to the development of a new pictorial genre, the *portrait historié* (historicized portrait), an allegorical mode of visual representation that, as will be explored in subsequent chapters, would be employed both to assert, and to subvert, the absolutist identity of Louis XIV.

In spite of the triumphant imagery disseminated in Mazarinades like *Vive le Roy*, *Point de Mazarin*, however, factional divisions and inadequate strategic coordination among the princes and princesses of the Fronde had stymied the revolt from the start. Just

as in the *Amazonomachiai* recorded by Homer, Virgil, Plutarch, Herodotus, and other ancient sources, the modern Amazons of the Fronde were ultimately defeated by their male opponents loyal to Mazarin, strengthening the authority of the monarchical state that would soon be inherited by Louis XIV, a young king who would be likened to Theseus, Alexander the Great, and other Greek subjugators of the Amazons.⁷² Yet, if the *frondeuses*' military engagement against the French crown had come to an unsuccessful close by October 1652, the duchesse de Montpensier's campaign of monarchical opposition was only in its infancy. Drawing from the visual and literary culture that had developed during the Fronde to represent women as heroic political and military leaders, Montpensier would devote the next several decades of her life to creating a modern society of Amazons and challenging the patriarchal construction of monarchical authority through diverse forms of cultural patronage. As will be explored in the next chapter, the duchess's cultural program would take shape against the backdrop of the personal reign of her first cousin, Louis XIV, whose finance minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert was to oversee the construction of a hegemonic cultural system of absolutist kingship. Staffed by an army of skilled bureaucrats, poets, playwrights, painters, architects, composers, and numerous other political, artistic, and intellectual contributors, this cultural bureaucracy ensured that the French king's identity as subjugator of the rebellious nobility, unrivalled master of Europe, and divinely anointed patriarch of the French people would be continuously exhibited and reaffirmed through the state-controlled semiotic networks of the representational public sphere. Leveraging her status as the richest woman in Europe

⁷² Burke, 28, 115.

and granddaughter of Henri IV, as well as her notoriety as the king's rebellious cousin, the duchesse de Montpensier's cultural strategies would attempt to break through the monologic absolutist discourse pervading the representational public sphere of Louis XIV's reign and establish a counter-cultural framework through which subsequent daughters and granddaughters of the Fronde could challenge the patriarchal authority of the French crown.

CHAPTER II

The King of France and the Queen of Saint-Fargeau: A Tale of Two Cousins

With the victory of the French monarchy over the *frondeurs*, the duchesse de Montpensier went into exile in October 1652 at the château de Saint-Fargeau, one of the many estates the duchess had inherited from her late mother. Situated about 100 miles southwest of Paris, Saint-Fargeau would serve as the duchess's home and prison for the next five years of her life, marking the end of her days on the battlefield. The first château of Saint-Fargeau was built in the tenth century by Héribert, bishop of Auxerre, the half-brother of Frankish king Hugh Capet, founder of the Capetian dynasty.⁷³ Over the next five centuries, ownership of Saint-Fargeau passed to the *seigneurs* of Toucy, and then to the dukes of Bar, who carried out intermittent expansions of the estate.⁷⁴ Like most *châteaux* constructed or expanded during this period of regular conflict between vassals loyal to the Plantagenet kings of England and vassals loyal to the Capetian and later Valois kings of France, the château of Saint-Fargeau was primarily designed to serve as a defensive structure. In 1450, the château was acquired by the fabulously wealthy merchant, Jacques Coeur, who, by this time, had become the personal financier, or *argentier*, of the French king, Charles VII.⁷⁵ By 1453, however, Jacques Coeur's rising political influence had become a source of concern for Charles VII, who, like many of his

⁷³ James Dalrymple Duncan, "The Château of St. Fargeau," *Transactions of the Glasgow Archaeological Society* 4, no. 2 (1902): 408.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 408-409.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 409-411; Montpensier, *Mémoires*, 2:309.

courtiers, also owed large sums of money to the financier. Accused and found guilty of a litany of crimes, Jacques Coeur was sentenced to prison, and his many estates, including Saint-Fargeau, were seized by the king. After Jacques Coeur's disgrace, Charles VII gave the château de Saint-Fargeau to Antoine de Chabannes, an important military leader who had fought against the English alongside Joan of Arc in the last decades of the Hundred Years War.⁷⁶

Antoine de Chabannes razed much of the existing tenth-century structure and replaced it with a new château built on a pentagonal plan, an atypical architectural form for the period (fig. 10).⁷⁷ As a soldier accustomed to combat, Antoine de Chabannes had his new château built like a fortress, with five long rectangular blocks, or *corps*, joined together by imposing towers of different sizes and a massive keep, or *donjon*, marking the five corners of the structure's irregular pentagonal plan. These heavy walls and round towers were built of red brick and topped with steep pitched slate roofs, creating a formidable defensive structure that enclosed the château's inner court (fig. 11). In contrast to the symmetrical balance and spatial organization seen in other *châteaux* from the second half of the fifteenth century, by which time Italian Renaissance architectural theory had made its way to the French kingdom, Antoine de Chabannes's château was built with no central block, or *corps de logis*, and its main entry was situated, not on the central axis of a rectangular façade, but in one of the five corners of the building.⁷⁸ To

⁷⁶ Duncan, 414.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 407; Claude Etienne, Baron Chaillou des Barres, *Les Chateaux d'Ancy-le-Franc, de Saint-Fargeau, de Chastellux, et de Tanlay* (Paris, 1845), 66.

⁷⁸ See Anthony Emery, *Seats of Power in Europe During the Hundred Years War: An Architectural Study from 1330 to 1480* (Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2016), 294-311.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 10. *Plan of the château de Saint-Fargeau. 1729. Drawing. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. Public domain. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.*



Figure 11. *Château de Saint-Fargeau.* Yonne, Bourgogne, France. Photograph by Christophe Finot. CC-BY-SA-3.0. Wikimedia Commons:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Saint-Fargeau_-_Ch%C3%A2teau_de_Saint-Fargeau_19.JPG

distinguish the principal entry from the château's other towered vertices, the portal was marked by two conjoined towers, instead of the single round tower marking each of the other four corners of the pentagonal structure. After Antoine de Chabannes's death in 1488, the château remained in the possession of his descendants for the next several decades, who left the structure largely unchanged.⁷⁹ In 1566, Antoine de Chabannes's great-great-granddaughter, Renée, married François de Bourbon, Duke de Montpensier, attaching the château, estate, and ducal title of Saint-Fargeau to the already vast assemblage of properties and noble titles that would one day be inherited by the couple's great-granddaughter, the Grande Mademoiselle.

As one of the many estates owned by the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century ducs and duchesses de Montpensier, the château de Saint-Fargeau, with its forbidding and outdated fortress-like design, was left largely uninhabited—and unmaintained—for close to a century. Thus, when the duchesse de Montpensier first arrived at Saint-Fargeau in late October 1652, the château she found was in a state of ruin. In her *Mémoires*, which she started writing shortly after her arrival to Saint-Fargeau, the duchess would describe this first distressing encounter with her place of exile:

I entered into an old house where there were no doors or windows, and grass reaching up to my knees in the courtyard; I was so horrified. They took me into an awful room, in the middle of which was a pole. . . . I found myself very sad, being away from the court, that I did not have a more beautiful residence than this one.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Duncan, 416.

⁸⁰ “J'entrai dans une vieille maison où il n'y avoit ni porte ni fenêtres, et de l'herbe jusqu'aux genoux dans la cour : j'en eus une grande horreur. L'on me mena dans une vilaine chambre, où il y avoit un poteau au milieu. . . . je me trouvois bien malheureuse, étant hors de la cour, de n'avoir pas une plus belle demeure que celle-là.” Montpensier, *Mémoires*, 2:227-228.

As Sophie Maríñez has observed, the state of architectural decay that the duchess so vividly depicts in her *Mémoires* simultaneously served to express the ruinous state of her reputation and social position in the aftermath of the Fronde.⁸¹ While the duchess was not alone at Saint-Fargeau—she was accompanied by her retinue of servants and a handful of close friends, including the countess of Frontenac—she now found herself excluded from court society, a social venue that, before the Fronde, had been central to her identity as a *petite fille de France*. When referring to this elite society, whose venues included, not only the royal court, but also Parisian *salons* like the Hôtel de Rambouillet and other spaces of aristocratic sociability, authors like the duchesse de Montpensier would use the term *le monde* (the world), an expression that speaks to the centrality of such social institutions in the formation and presentation of aristocratic and princely identity. Reflecting on her banishment from *le monde*, the duchess would contrast her relative physical proximity to the court with the social remoteness of her new surroundings. “I was close to the world, to my friends and to those who were supposed to be my friends,” she writes, “and yet in the world’s greatest desert, because, Saint-Fargeau being a little known place, one would think I was in another world.”⁸² At the same time that the duchesse de Montpensier was commencing her exile in this deserted world, the *frondeuse*’s nemesis, Cardinal Mazarin, was laying the foundations for the new absolutist system that would shape the post-Fronde world of the French court.

⁸¹ Sophie Maríñez, *Mademoiselle de Montpensier: Writings, Châteaux, and Female Self-Construction in Early Modern France* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2017), 57.

⁸² “. . . j’étois proche du monde, de mes amis et de ceux qui devoient l’être, et pourtant dans le plus grand désert du monde, parce que, Saint-Fargeau étant un lieu peu connu, l’on croiroit que j’étois dans un autre monde.” Montpensier, *Mémoires*, 2:223.

On February 23, 1653, members of the French court who had avoided the social repudiation inflicted on *frondeuses* like the duchesse de Montpensier gathered at the Hôtel du Petit-Bourbon in Paris to attend the *Ballet Royal de la Nuit* (Royal Ballet of the Night), an extravagant court ballet, or *ballet de cour*, in which professional musicians and dancers would perform alongside dancing courtiers. This twelve-hour production, which began at dusk and continued until dawn, unfolded over four acts, each corresponding with a different phase of the night.⁸³ In the first act, dancers dressed as shepherds and hunters reveal the pastoral and harmonious state of the kingdom as the day begins its descent into night. By the third act, however, the kingdom has been consumed by the wicked forces of darkness, and dancers dressed as witches, demons, and other agents of evil take the stage. In the fourth and final act, these dark forces are expelled from the kingdom by the *Soleil Levant* (Rising Sun)—a heroic role performed by none other than the fourteen-year-old Louis XIV (fig. 12). For the courtiers in attendance, the staging of the *Ballet Royal de la Nuit* was not a simple *divertissement*. Performed just weeks after Cardinal Mazarin’s return from exile, the court ballet’s narrative of the triumph of the sun over darkness was an explicit allegorical representation of the monarchy’s victory over the *frondeurs*—and a thinly veiled warning about the tragic fate awaiting those who would challenge the authority of the king.⁸⁴

⁸³ Jennifer Thorp, “Drama and dance in Le Ballet de la Nuit 1653,” in *On Common Ground 5: Dance in Drama, Drama in Dance: Proceedings of the Fifth DHDS Conference, 12 March 2005*, ed. David Parsons (Ingatestone, UK: Dolmetsch Historical Dance Society, 2005), 54.

⁸⁴ Julia Prest, “The Politics of Ballet at the Court of Louis XIV,” in *Dance, Spectacle, and the Body Politick, 1250-1750*, ed. Jennifer Nevile (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), 234.

Overseen by Mazarin himself, the performance of the *Ballet Royal de la Nuit* introduced a new cultural language of kingship that allowed the cardinal-minister to represent the abstract political principles of royal absolutism through the theatrical medium of the *ballet de cour*. Appearing on stage as the Rising Sun, Louis XIV was also portraying the sun's Olympian incarnation, Apollo, whose mythical identity as the Greco-Roman god of the sun and divine protector of music, poetry, and the arts would form an important part of the French king's own monarchical identity.⁸⁵ Yet, much like the Amazonian imagery employed in visual and literary representations of *frondeuses* like the duchesse de Chevreuse and the duchesse de Montpensier, the solar and Apollonian themes used to construct Louis XIV's theatrical persona were but components of a multi-faceted language of kingship. Adapting the emerging pictorial genre of the *portrait historié* to the theatrical medium of the *ballet de cour*, Mazarin brought the young king to the stage, not to perform the role of Apollo, but to assume the role of Louis XIV the sovereign and victor of the Fronde. That Mazarin had conceived the ballet as a performance of absolutist kingship was stated quite clearly by the character of Aurora, goddess of the dawn, who took the stage to announce the imminent arrival of the Rising Sun:

The Stars all flee
 From the moment this great Star approaches
 The weak lights of the Night
 Who triumphed in his absence
 Do not dare to be in his presence;
 All of these fickle lights have fainted,

⁸⁵ Burke, 41, 44-5, 196-7.

The Son that follows me is the young LOUIS.⁸⁶

With these lines of verse, the once vulnerable child whose authority had been so openly disrespected by his own uncle and cousins during the Fronde would make his entrance as the *Roi Soleil*. Whether attending as spectators, or performing as shepherds, witches, or minor celestial bodies, the courtiers at the Hôtel du Petit-Bourbon were rehearsing the subordinate roles they would come to play as small cogs in the heliocentric system of absolutism.

The image of kingship that Louis XIV had performed in the *Ballet royal de la Nuit* would also be represented in other forms of visual media. In 1653, the French artist Charles Poerson painted a *portrait historié* of Louis XIV dressed as Jupiter, the Roman god of thunder and ruler of the Olympian deities (fig. 13). Seated in a gilded throne and accompanied by an eagle, the avian symbol of Jupiter, Louis XIV grips a cluster of thunderbolts and, with his left foot, stomps on a shield emblazoned with the shrieking face of medusa. Entitled *Louis XIV as Jupiter, Vanquisher of the Fronde*, the bottom of the painted canvas bears the following Latin inscription: IVPITER APPLAVDENS LODOICO FVLMINA CESSIT, IAMQVE NOVVM MVNDVS SENSIT ADESSE IOVEM (Jupiter, applauding, gave Louis thunderbolts, and the world already sees in him a new Jupiter). Despite the antique architectural setting and costume depicted in the painting, the figure represented by Poerson, as the inscription makes clear, is not an

⁸⁶ “La troupe des Astres s'enfuit / Dés que ce grand Astre s'avance, / Les foibles clartez de la Nuit / Qui trimphoient en son absence / N'osent soûtenir sa presence; / Tous ces volages feux s'en vont evanoüys, / Le Soleil qui me suit c'est le jeune LOUIS.” Isaac de Benserade, *Ballet royal de la Nuit, divisé en quatre parties, ou quatre veilles : et dansé par Sa Majesté, le 23 février 1653* (Paris, 1653), 65.

Olympian deity, but the “new Jupiter”—the young king, Louis XIV. Wielding the thunderbolts he received from Jupiter, Louis XIV’s left foot draws the viewer’s attention to the fate of past enemies who had dared to face the king’s Jovian weaponry. While the face of Medusa, visible on the discarded shield beneath the foot of the king, was a commonly depicted symbol of evil in seventeenth-century visual culture, its appearance in Poerson’s *portrait historié* is also a clear reference to the king’s triumph over the women of the Fronde.⁸⁷ As we saw in the previous chapter, visual representations of prominent *frondeuses* like the duchesse de Montpensier often combined Amazonian iconography with visual motifs associated with other powerful women from historical and mythological sources, such as the Medusa-faced shield of Minerva. By stomping on a shield emblazoned with the face of Medusa, a shield like the one wielded by the duchesse de Montpensier in illustrated *mazarinades*, Louis XIV is identified, not only as the vanquisher of the Fronde, but also as the subjugator of the Amazons, restoring the patriarchal social order of his kingdom. In 1654, the year of Louis XIV’s formal coronation ceremony at Reims Cathedral, the image of Louis XIV as the vanquisher of the Fronde was carved in stone by the French sculptor Gilles Guérin and installed for all of Paris to see in the courtyard of the Hôtel de Ville (fig. 14). Whether on the stage of the Hôtel du Petit-Bourbon, the walls of the Louvre, or the public spaces of Paris, the image of Louis XIV came to pervade the representational public sphere. Using mythological and allegorical themes to invest the monarchy’s victory over the *frondeuses* with the

⁸⁷ Steven G. Reinhardt, ed., *The Sun King: Louis XIV and the New World* (New Orleans: Louisiana State Museum, 1984), 191.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 12. *Louis XIV dressed as Apollo/the Rising Sun in the Ballet Royal de la Nuit.* Drawing by Henri de Gissey. 1653. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. Public domain. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Figure 13. *Portrait of Louis XIV as Jupiter Conquering the Fronde.* Charles Poerson. ca. 1653. Oil on canvas. Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles, France. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 14. *Statue of Louis XIV crushing the Fronde.* Gilles Guérin. 1653. Marble. Château de Chantilly, Chantilly, France. Photograph by Thesupermat. CC-BY-SA-3.0. Wikimedia Commons:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ch%C3%A2teau_de_Chantilly_-_Cour_de_la_Capitainerie_-_PA00114578_-_001.jpg

Originally installed in the courtyard of the Hôtel de Ville in Paris.

weight of a Homeric epic, these *portraits historiés* also served to reinforce the patriarchal and absolutist principles at the center of the king's monarchical system.

As Cardinal Mazarin was at work overseeing the construction of a centralized cultural apparatus tasked with creating and disseminating the king's image through a variety of visual and ritual forms, the duchesse de Montpensier set out to transform the dilapidated château de Saint-Fargeau into a residence worthy of her status as a *petite-fille de France*. Yet, what had started in 1652 as an architectural renovation would ultimately turn into an act of political resistance, whereby the duchess would attempt to transform her place of exile into a venue of aristocratic sociability rivalling the royal court of Louis XIV. As had been the tradition since the Middle Ages, the royal court of the young Louis XIV was not tied to a specific physical venue, but rather moved between different royal palaces, such as the Tuileries in Paris or the châteaux of Fontainebleau and Saint-Germain-En-Laye.⁸⁸ Members of the nobility typically resided in their own family estates or Parisian *hôtels* and divided their time between court life and the aristocratic sociability of the Paris *salons*. Sent into exile more than decade before Louis XIV would begin his first building campaign at Versailles, the duchesse de Montpensier, as Juliette Cherbuliez has noted, came to see her forced confinement in a fixed location as an asset.⁸⁹ Whereas the royal court remained itinerant and physically decentralized, the duchesse de

⁸⁸ Juliette Cherbuliez, "Before and Beyond Versailles: The Counter-Court of the Duchesse de Montpensier, 1652-1660," *Nottingham French Studies* 39, no. 2 (Autumn 2000): 133-134.

⁸⁹ Juliette Cherbuliez, "A Culture of Exile: Fiction by Women in Seventeenth-Century France" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1999), 50.

Montpensier would turn her place of exile, the château de Saint-Fargeau, into an enduring center of courtly life—a counter-court in which the duchess would reign as queen.

In her study of the theme of exile in the literary works of the duchesse de Montpensier and other seventeenth-century women authors, Juliette Cherbuliez introduces this concept of a “counter-court” to describe the social and cultural strategies that the duchess pursued at Saint-Fargeau.⁹⁰ Through the creation of this counter-court, the duchesse de Montpensier succeeded in drawing fellow aristocrats away from the Sun King’s orbit by securing their participation in what Cherbuliez has described as an aristocratic counterculture, or “a social formation which denied support to the regicentric aristocratic culture of Louis XIV.”⁹¹ In addition to promoting a culture of monarchical opposition, the counter-court of the duchesse de Montpensier also provided a space in which the *frondeuses*’ vision of a modern community of Amazons could be realized. Away from the domineering patriarchal structures of her family and the court, the duchess found herself at the helm of a vibrant community of aristocrats and intellectuals—most of them women. Some of the most well-known members of the duchess’s community of Amazons, like the famous epistolarian, the marquise de Sévigné, kept their place within Parisian aristocratic society, making only occasional pilgrimages to the counter-court of the duchesse de Montpensier for special events.⁹² Many others, however, like the comtesse de Maure, the marquise de Thianges, and the duchesse de Sully, would take up residence in the château de Saint-Fargeau, where they served as

⁹⁰ Ibid., 42.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Maríñez, 100.

perennial fixtures of the duchess's counter-court.⁹³ Evoking the literary community of politically, intellectually, and morally virtuous women assembled in Christine de Pizan's *Cité des Dames*, the duchesse de Montpensier's Amazonian queendom at Saint-Fargeau was formed around a set of anti-patriarchal ideals that the duchess would later outline in a letter to Françoise de Motteville, *première dame de chambre* (first lady of the queen's bedchamber) to the queen-mother, Anne of Austria. "Marriage is that which has given men the upper hand," wrote Montpensier:

[and] this dependence to which custom subjects us, often against our will and because of family obligations of which we have been the victims, is what has caused us to be named the weaker sex. Let us at last deliver ourselves from this slavery; let there be a corner of the world in which it can be said that women are their own mistresses and do not have all the faults that are attributed to them; and let us celebrate ourselves for the centuries to come through a way of life that will immortalize us.⁹⁴

This feminocentric way of life that the duchesse de Montpensier had endeavored to bring to her own "corner of the world" at Saint-Fargeau would indeed come to immortalize the duchess's community of Amazons—if not corporally, then at least pictorially. For, at some point during the duchess's exile, the counter-court of Saint-Fargeau was preserved for posterity in a *portrait historié* featuring the mythologized likenesses of the duchesse de Montpensier and several of her female subjects (fig. 15).

Attributed to the French painter Pierre Mignard, the allegorical group portrait represents the duchesse de Montpensier in the guise of Diana, the Roman goddess of the hunt, and depicts the women of her court in the role of Diana's nymphs, accompanying

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Montpensier, "Letter 3: Mademoiselle to Madame de Motteville (1660)," in *Against Marriage*, 47-49.

their divine ruler on a hunt in the forest. By employing the hybrid genre of the *portrait historié*, which, as we examined in the preceding chapter, emerged out of the oppositional visual culture of the Fronde, Montpensier's portraitist presents two concurrent pictorial narratives, each serving to advance the duchess's political ambitions and oppositional strategies. Read as a formal hunting portrait set in the forest of Saint-Fargeau, the painting, which shows a pack of hunting dogs violently mauling a stag that the duchess has fatally wounded with her bow and arrow, reveals the duchesse de Montpensier's capacity for violence and great skill in the use of arms, appropriating these traditionally masculine attributes of virile kingship to subvert the gendered construction of royal sovereignty. When read as a mythological painting of Diana and her nymphs, however, the mutilated carcass of the stag in the duchesse de Montpensier's *portrait historié* comes to represent the metamorphosed body of the Greek hunter, Actaeon. In the version of the myth recounted by the first-century Roman poet, Ovid, Actaeon, a young man hunting in the woods with his hounds, inadvertently comes across Diana as the goddess is bathing with her nymphs. As a virgin goddess revered for her chastity, Diana is so enraged at having been seen by a man in her state of undress that she turns Actaeon into a stag. Now inhabiting the body of the very animal he had trained his dogs to hunt, Actaeon is chased down and ultimately torn apart by his own pack of hounds.

The overwhelming majority of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century pictorial representations of the myth of Diana and Actaeon, beginning with Titian's influential treatment of the subject in 1559 (fig. 16), had depicted the moment of Actaeon's initial encounter with the nude goddess and her circle of equally underdressed nymphs, a scene

of mythological voyeurism that allowed male patrons to gaze upon a group of bathing women without suffering the same divine retribution visited upon Actaeon. By asking her portraitist to focus instead on the moment of Actaeon's violent death at the hands of a powerful—and very much clothed—goddess, the duchesse de Montpensier, who appears in the painting as the vengeful Diana herself, presented a powerful warning about the measures she would take to defend her community of Amazons against the intrusion of the patriarchal order. In addition to offering a mythological parallel to Montpensier's Amazonian community, the theme of Diana and her community of nymphs also allowed the Grande Mademoiselle to advance her cultural strategy of monarchical opposition through the language of visual allegory by way of the goddess Diana's relationship with Louis XIV's own Olympian alter-ego, the god Apollo. For while Apollo and Diana are identified in ancient accounts as twin siblings—just as Louis XIV and Montpensier were first cousins—Diana was represented in visual and literary sources as a goddess of the moon. Appearing in her *portrait historié* with a crescent moon affixed to her hair, Montpensier's lunar emblem announced the queen of Saint-Fargeau's cultural and political opposition to the monarchical regime of the Sun King.

The social, cultural, and political ideals upon which the duchesse de Montpensier's community of Amazons was founded had also informed the architectural transformation of the once-dilapidated château de Saint-Fargeau into an artistic expression of the duchess's imperial ambitions. After finding her family's long-abandoned château in an uninhabitable state in October 1652, the duchesse de Montpensier was lodged in a small château situated “two leagues away, owned by a man

named Davaux” while her attendants prepared Saint-Fargeau for residential use.⁹⁵ When the duchess finally took up residence at Saint-Fargeau in November 1652, she immediately set out to transform the château into what she would later call her “enchanted palace.”⁹⁶ In her *Mémoires*, Montpensier writes that, from the moment she moved into Saint-Fargeau, she “wanted to change the chimneys and the door, and build an alcove” and began to inquire if any talented architects resided in the area.⁹⁷ Unable to find an architect, she decided to oversee the interior renovations herself and moved into the attic of the château so that the decoration of her apartment could proceed without delay. In keeping with the most current fashion in French palatial architecture, the duchesse de Montpensier’s apartment comprised a suite of rooms, known as an *enfilade*, each room serving a particular social, ceremonial, or practical function.⁹⁸ The first room, known as the *antichambre*, functioned as a reception area where the duchess could receive visitors of all different social positions and take her meals in a semi-public space, prefiguring the ceremony of the *souper au Grand Couvert* that Louis XIV would later perform in his *antichambre* at Versailles.⁹⁹ Higher ranking visitors would have been allowed to move from the *antichambre* into the next room of the apartment, the duchess’s

⁹⁵ “. . . à deux lieues de là, chez un nommé Davaux.” Montpensier, *Mémoires*, 2:228.

⁹⁶ “. . . un palais enchanté.” Ibid., 2:284.

⁹⁷ “Dès ce même jour je voulus changer les cheminées et les portes, y faire une alcôve; je m'informai s'il n'y avoit point d'architecte dans le pays.” Ibid., 2:230.

⁹⁸ In 1752, the château de Saint-Fargeau suffered a devastating fire that destroyed the entirety of the duchesse de Montpensier’s apartments. The following analysis of Montpensier’s apartment at Saint-Fargeau is based on descriptions found in her *Mémoires*.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 2:283; Louis de Rouvroy, duc de Saint-Simon, *Mémoires du duc de Saint-Simon*, ed. Adolphe Chéruel and Adolphe Regnier (Paris, 1886), 12:181.

portrait gallery. Creating an architectural manifestation of Pierre Le Moyne's *Galerie des Femmes Fortes*, the duchess adorned her gallery with portraits of prominent women, including: the Spanish queen, Mariana of Austria; the exiled queen of England, Henrietta Maria; Christine de France, Duchess of Savoy; Marguerite Louise d'Orléans; the queen mother, Anne of Austria; Montpensier's late mother, Marie de Bourbon; and Montpensier's illustrious grandmother, the French queen, Marie de' Medici.¹⁰⁰ Within this pictorial pantheon of illustrious women, the duchess also included the portraits of a handful of male relatives, including a portrait of the man who had ordered her exile—the duchess's cousin, Louis XIV. Yet, while most exiled *frondeurs*, like her father Gaston d'Orléans, would have signaled their desire to return to Louis XIV's good graces by giving pride of place to a portrait of the king, the duchesse de Montpensier makes it a point to mention in her *Mémoires* that she filled “the most beautiful spot” of her gallery with the portrait of her great-grandfather, François de Bourbon, duc de Montpensier—not with the portrait of her royal cousin.¹⁰¹

Completed more than two decades before Louis XIV would initiate the construction of his magnificent mirrored gallery, the *Galerie des Glaces*, at the château de Versailles, Montpensier's gallery at Saint-Fargeau was largely inspired by an earlier gallery built by her paternal grandmother, Marie de' Medici, the Florentine-born queen of France whose portrait held a privileged position within the duchess's pictorial collection of illustrious women.¹⁰² Daughter of the Medici Grand Duke of Tuscany, Francesco I,

¹⁰⁰ Montpensier, *Mémoires*, 2:283.

¹⁰¹ “. . . [le portrait] de M. de Montpenser . . . étoit en la plus belle place.” Ibid.

¹⁰² Maríñez, 85.

Marie de' Medici was sent to France in 1600 to marry the French king, Henri IV, after the latter's childless marriage to Marguerite of Valois was annulled. On May 14, 1610, the day after Marie de' Medici's long-delayed coronation ceremony had finally taken place at the royal basilica of Saint-Denis, Henri IV was assassinated by the fanatical Catholic, François Ravailac. With her son, Louis XIII, too young to rule, Marie de' Medici became regent of France, assuming near-total control of the French state over the four-year period of her regency (May 1610 - October 1614) and maintaining her role as *de facto* sovereign of France for the first three years of Louis XIII's formal reign (October 1614 - April 1617). When Marie de' Medici made her first visit to the Louvre in 1600, she reportedly found the French palace so inferior in quality and beauty to the Florentine *palazzi* of her youth that she thought she was being subjected to a practical joke.¹⁰³ Thus, in 1615, Marie de' Medici used her new political position and financial resources to commission French architect Salomon de Brosse to build a large palace based on the design of the Palazzo Pitti in Florence.

Known as the Palais du Luxembourg (fig. 17), Marie de' Medici's Parisian palace featured a great gallery that would be decorated with twenty-four immense canvases painted by Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens. Known as the Marie de' Medici cycle (fig. 18), Rubens' paintings employed the exuberant allegorical language of the artist's biblical and mythological works to represent episodes from the life of the queen-regent. In one of these episodes, *The Apotheosis of Henri IV and the Proclamation of the*

¹⁰³ Louis Batiffol, *La Vie Intime d'une Reine de France Au XVIIe Siècle*, 2nd. ed. (Paris, 1906), 69.

Regency of Marie de' Médici (fig. 19), Montpensier's grandmother is shown seated on the throne of a Roman emperor, which sits atop a dais framed by the twisting columns of the temple of Solomon. Standing beside Marie de Medici is the figure of Minerva, dressed for combat in her antique cuirass and feather-crested helmet and brandishing a shield emblazoned with the face of Medusa. As a group of men kneel before her in a gesture of submission, the allegorical figure of France presents the queen-regent with an orb, symbolizing her sovereign authority over the terrestrial sphere. Presaging the Amazonian iconography that *frondeuses* like Montpensier would use to construct their own identities as political women, Rubens' allegorical figure of France is dressed as an Amazon warrior. While the portraits displayed in the duchesse de Montpensier's gallery at Saint-Fargeau would come nowhere near the scale, complexity, or self-aggrandizing rhetoric exhibited by her grandmother's mythologizing pictorial autobiography, both women would use allegorical portraiture, Amazonian imagery, and the architectural form of the gallery to assert the legitimacy of female rule.

Those whom Montpensier held in high esteem would be permitted to penetrate further into the duchess's apartment, moving past the gallery and into the more private spaces of her bedchamber, *cabinet*, and *garderobe*. While the duchess's bedchamber and *garderobe* (wardrobe) featured few decorative elements, owing to the spaces' utilitarian function, Montpensier tell us that she decorated her *cabinet* with an assortment of paintings and mirrors.¹⁰⁴ After the decoration of her *cabinet* was complete, Montpensier

¹⁰⁴ Montpensier, *Mémoires*, 2:284.



Figure 15. *Allegorical portrait of the hunt of the Grande Mademoiselle as Diana.*

Attributed to Pierre Mignard. ca. 1652-1665. Oil on canvas. Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels, Belgium. © KIK-IRPA, Brussels. CC BY-NC-SA 3.0, via Europeana.

https://www.europeana.eu/en/item/2048001/Athena_Plus_ProvidedCHO_KIK_IRPA_Brussels_Belgium_AP_10335167



Figure 16. *Diana and Actaeon*. Titian (Tiziano Vecellio). 1556-1559. Oil on canvas. National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh / The National Gallery, London. Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

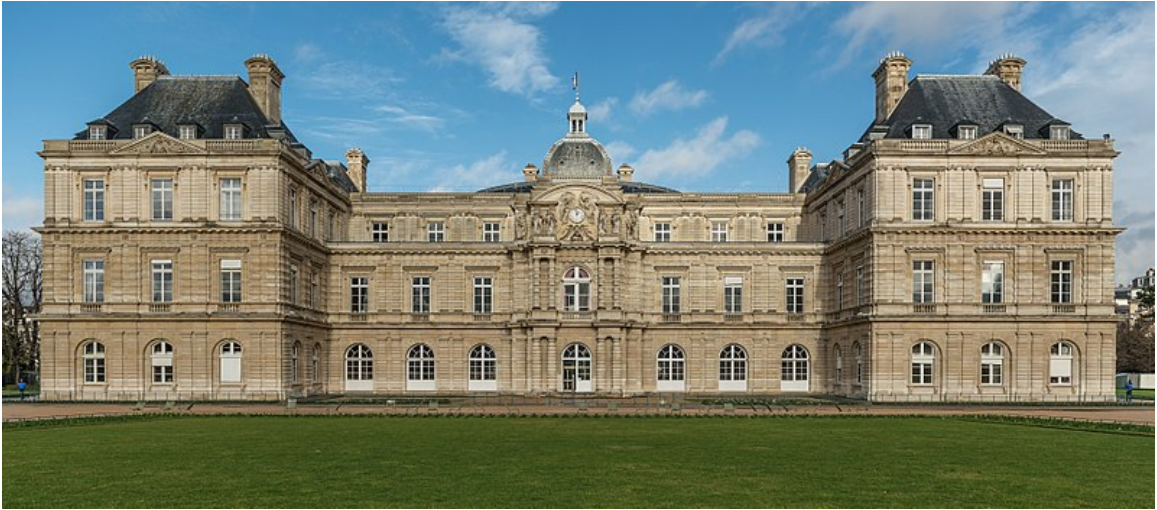


Figure 17. *South Façade of the Palais du Luxembourg.* Paris. Designed by Salomon de Brosse. 1615-1631. Photograph by DXR. CC-BY-SA-3.0. Wikimedia Commons: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palais_du_Luxembourg,_South_View_140116_1.jpg



Figure 18. *Peter Paul Rubens' Marie de' Medici Cycle at the Musée du Louvre in 1929,* from *L'Illustration*, 1929. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

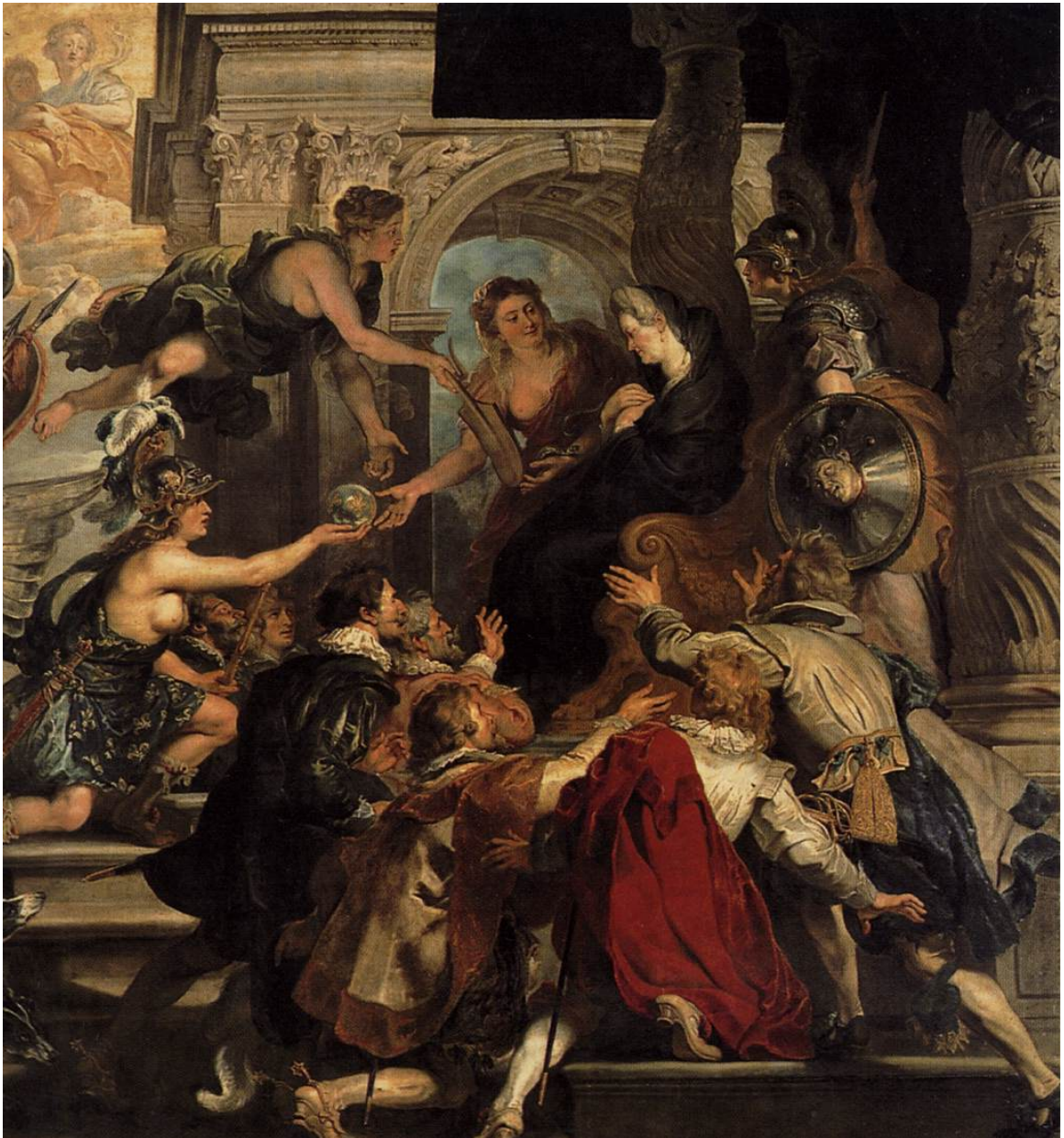


Figure 19. *The Apotheosis of Henri IV and the Proclamation of the Regency of Marie de' Medici* (detail). Peter Paul Rubens. 1623-1625. Oil on canvas. Musée du Louvre, Paris. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

took to her *Mémoires* to celebrate her artistic achievement: “I was delighted and felt that I had made the most beautiful thing in the world. I showed my apartment to those who came to visit with as much indulgence for my work as might have done the queen, my grandmother, when she showed her Luxembourg.”¹⁰⁵ Over the course of her interior renovation campaign, the duchesse de Montpensier began to see her grandmother, Marie de’ Medici, not only as a source of artistic inspiration, but also, as the above passage reveals, as a model on which to base her new found identity as queen of Saint-Fargeau. Indeed, as Sophie Maríñez has noted, not only did the duchesse de Montpensier identify with Marie de’ Medici’s experience of being a politically ambitious woman in a patriarchal society, but, as a woman in exile, she could also identify with the social ostracization that her grandmother endured as a result of her transgressions against the patriarchal order.¹⁰⁶ In 1630, after a failed attempt at ousting her son’s chief minister, Cardinal Richelieu, from power, Marie de’ Medici had been sent into exile and forced to find refuge outside of France, eventually settling in the imperial city of Cologne where she would remain until her death in 1642. Sent into exile for challenging the authority of Louis XIV and Cardinal Mazarin, the successors of the two men responsible for Marie de’ Medici’s banishment twenty-three years earlier, the duchesse de Montpensier came to see herself as the reigning member of an illustrious dynasty of female rulers, a crown she inherited upon her grandmother’s martyrdom at the hands of the ignoble kings of France.

¹⁰⁵ “. . . j'étois ravie et croyois avoir fait la blue belle chose du monde. Je montrois mon appartement à tous ceux qui me venoient voir avec autant de complaisance pour mon œuvre qu'auroit pu le faire la reine, ma grand'mère, lorsqu'elle montrait son Luxembourg.” Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Maríñez, 55-56.

Perhaps the most important space to the duchesse de Montpensier in her role as queen of the counter-court of Saint-Fargeau was the theater she had constructed in 1653 in the great hall of her château.¹⁰⁷ While Mazarin was at work staging theatrical performances in Paris that used mythological themes to assert the absolutist and patriarchal authority of the duchess's cousin—and star ballet dancer—Louis XIV, the duchesse de Montpensier began organizing musical and theatrical performances of her own at Saint-Fargeau. A central component of the hegemonic cultural system that Mazarin, and his eventual successor, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, would work to develop under Louis XIV, the staging of theatrical performances in and around Paris was quickly coming under the control of the monarchical state, a cultural strategy that would culminate in the founding of the state-controlled *Académie Royale de Danse* (Royal Academy of Dance) and *Académie Royale d'Opéra* (Royal Academy of Opera) in 1661 and 1669, respectively.¹⁰⁸ Free of the monarchical rhetoric that came to pervade the *ballets de cour* performed by Louis XIV, the pastoral ballets and comedies staged at Saint-Fargeau drew large audiences from Parisian aristocratic society to attend the counter-court of the duchesse de Montpensier.¹⁰⁹ Built at a time when the royal *ballets de cour* were being staged in improvised venues like the *salle* of the Hôtel du Petit-Bourbon, the duchess's theater, at three-hundred square meters in size, was the largest in the kingdom, a superlative befitting her assumed identity as the queen of Saint-Fargeau.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Barres, 75.

¹⁰⁸ Burke, 50. In 1672, the *Académie Royale d'Opéra* was renamed the *Académie Royale de Musique* (Royal Academy of Music).

¹⁰⁹ Cherbuliez, 53-55.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

The performances held at Saint-Fargeau were often centered around bucolic themes of freedom from the restrictive burdens of society and frequently featured female protagonists like Flora, the Roman goddess of flowers and nature.¹¹¹ Behind these outwardly frivolous themes, however, one finds conspicuous traces of Montpensier's cultural strategy of monarchical opposition. Amidst the construction of an absolutist system founded on the centrality and omnipresent visibility of the king's sacred image, the performances organized by the duchesse de Montpensier, much like her portrait gallery of *femmes fortes*, offered a vision of a world in which women, not the king, took center stage.

If the duchess's theater was a space in which her strategy of monarchical opposition was at its most public, then the duchess's *petit cabinet*, a small study discretely situated behind her bedchamber, was where the Grand Mademoiselle would retreat to articulate her political ambitions in private. It was here in this small room, which the duchess affectionately described as "a small *cabinet* where there is only enough space for me," where, in 1653, Montpensier began to write her *Mémoires*.¹¹² The duchess's *Mémoires*, as Mariñes has noted, can be divided into three phases.¹¹³ The first phase, composed between 1653 and 1660, provides an account of Montpensier's life from the time of her birth in 1627 until 1660, at which time she stopped recording events from her daily life. The next two phases of Montpensier's *Mémoires*, which would not begin

¹¹¹ Arvède Barine, "La Grande Mademoiselle," *Revue des Deux Mondes* 11 (September 1, 1902): 16.

¹¹² ". . . un petit cabinet où il n'y a place que pour moi." Montpensier, *Mémoires*, 2:284.

¹¹³ Mariñez, 58-60.

until 1677 and 1689, respectively, unfolded much later in the duchess's life, long after her exile to Saint-Fargeau. In addition to working on her *Mémoires*, the duchesse de Montpensier would also retreat to the private space of her *petit cabinet* to write her own fictional narratives. Prior to her exile, the duchesse de Montpensier had frequented the literary salon of Catherine de Vivonne, marquise de Rambouillet, where she encountered many of the women writers who would one day join the duchess's counter-court at Saint-Fargeau. In 1649, one of the best-known authors from Rambouillet's *salon*, Madeleine de Scudéry, published the first of the eventual ten volumes of her colossal literary work, *Artamène ou le Grand Cyrus* (Artamène, or Cyrus the Great). Together with the fictional narratives produced by Scudéry's younger contemporary, Madame de Lafayette, *Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus* was among the first texts to exhibit what Joan DeJean has described as "the strains of prose fiction in which today's readers would recognize the emerging modern novel."¹¹⁴ Evoking the emerging pictorial genre of the *portrait historié*, Scudéry's *Artamène* is also widely regarded as one of the first examples of a *roman à clef*, a work of fiction depicting contemporary events and contemporary people familiar to the author's audience, using historical or mythological guises to loosely mask their real-world identities. During her exile at Saint-Fargeau, the duchesse de Montpensier would experiment with this new literary genre developed by her former *salon* companion in a series of her own *romans à clefs*, and even had her own printing press installed in her château to self-publish her writings.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Joan DeJean, "The Politics of Genre: Madeleine de Scudéry and the Rise of the French Novel," *L'Esprit Créateur* 29, no. 3 (Fall 1989): 43.

¹¹⁵ DeJean, introduction to *Against Marriage*, 10.

On July 26, 1657, after spending five years in exile, the duchesse de Montpensier was finally allowed to return to the royal court. Upon her arrival in Paris, however, the Amazonian queen of Saint-Fargeau found herself back in the patriarchal system of her cousin's monarchical regime. Now free to reclaim her role at court as a *petite fille de France*, the duchesse de Montpensier would instead make regular trips back to Saint-Fargeau. Recalling one such trip to her counter-court, the duchess would write: "I returned to Saint-Fargeau filled with the usual joy; yet also with the regret of knowing I would need to leave again soon."¹¹⁶ During these return trips to Saint-Fargeau, Montpensier would spend time in her *petit cabinet* writing her next work of literary fiction, a *roman à clef* she titled *Histoire de la Princesse de Paphlagonie* (History of the Princess of Paphlagonie). Using her own printing press, Montpensier published her *roman à clef* in 1659, distributing copies to her friends and members of her counter-court. The *Histoire de la Princesse de Paphlagonie* tells the story of the empire of Paphlagonie, a domain ruled by a wise and powerful queen. At the beginning of the novel, Cyrus, the treacherous Persian king, invades Paphlagonie. The queen, fearing that the Persian despot will force her daughter, the princess of Paphlagonie, into marriage, sends the princess to find refuge in Misnie, another sovereign nation ruled by women. After spending time in exile amongst the learned women of Misnie, the princess returns to her native land to take the throne of Paphlagonie. Attacked by enemy kingdoms upon her return to Paphlagonie, the princess's aggressors are handily defeated by the queen of the Amazons who,

¹¹⁶ "Je m'en retournai à Saint-Fargeau avec la joie accoutumée; mais pourtant avec le regret d'être sûre de le quitter bientôt." Montpensier, *Mémoires*, 3:54.

Montpensier writes: “came with very nimble and hardened troops; she cut all these rebels to pieces, drove the conspirators out of Paphlagonie; and our princess remains on her throne triumphant over all her enemies.”¹¹⁷ In this *roman à clef*, where well-known contemporaries of the author appear disguised as fictional characters, Montpensier appears in the guise of the queen of the Amazons. The ruler of a community of women, Montpensier’s Amazonian alter-ego defeats the Persian king Cyrus the Great in battle, allowing the gynocratic empires of the Paphlagonians, the Misnians, and the Amazons to endure, free from all patriarchal intrusion.

Contemporary readers of Montpensier’s *Histoire de la Princesse de Paphlagonie*, who were certainly familiar with Madeleine de Scudéry’s *Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus*, would have already come to identify the literary character of Cyrus the Great with Louis XIV. Like Cyrus the Great, whose heroic battles filled the pages of the Scudéry’s *roman à clef*, the heroic image of Louis XIV was represented throughout the Parisian public sphere, a ubiquitous patriarchal presence that the duchesse de Montpensier could only escape when at Saint-Fargeau. Thus, in the opening pages of her *Histoire de la Princesse de Paphlagonie*, Montpensier, while acknowledging her indebtedness to Scudéry’s popular novel, criticized *Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus* for excessively glorifying the figure of Cyrus the Great: “Cyrus continued his conquests; . . . The history of Persia makes enough mention of his conquests and the progress of his weapons without my

¹¹⁷ “La reine des Amazones vint avec des troupes fort lestes et fort aguerries; elle tailla en pieces tous ces révoltés, chassa les conjurés hors de la Paphlagonie; et notre princesse demeur sur son trône triomphante de tous ses ennemis.” Anne Marie Louise d’Orléans, duchesse de Montpensier, *Relation de l’Isle Imaginaire, Histoire de la Princesse de Paphlagonie* (Paris, 1805), 94.

mentioning them; that is why I will always stay with our ladies.”¹¹⁸ Challenging the cultural hegemony of her cousin’s reign, the duchesse de Montpensier’s *roman à clef* subverted the triumphant literary identity of Louis XIV by presenting him as the villain of her novel, a villain ultimately defeated by the army of the Amazonian queen. This literary attack on the monarchical authority of the Sun King is made all the more explicit when Montpensier the narrator describes the princesse de Paphlagonie as the “mortal enemy” of the sun, whose rays the princess evades by “not awaking until sunset and . . . not sleeping until sunrise” and by refusing to adhere to the authority of clocks that follow the position of the sun.¹¹⁹

On March 9, 1661, Cardinal Mazarin, the despised enemy of the *frondeurs*, died at the age of fifty-eight. After Mazarin’s death, it was expected that Louis XIV would name a new minister to replace the late cardinal as his principal minister. To the surprise of many, however, the king declared that he would rule alone—without a chief minister in charge of state affairs.¹²⁰ Yet, while Louis XIV would indeed govern the French kingdom without a *premier ministre* for the next fifty-four years, he would do so with the assistance of a large bureaucratic network overseen by his finance minister, Jean-Baptiste

¹¹⁸ “Cyrus poursuit ses conquêtes; . . . L’histoire de Perse fait assez de mention de ses conquêtes et du progrès de ses armes sans que j’en parle; c’est pourquoi je demeurerai toujours à nos dames.” *Ibid.*, 84.

¹¹⁹ “Elle ne vivoit pas comme le reste des mortels, et elle ne s’abbaioit pas à cette regle où l’usage assujettit les gens du commun à se régler selon les horloges: . . . On croyoit en ce pays-là que cela choquoit tout-à-fait le bon sens, parceque d’ordinaire on regle les cadrans sur le soleil, et c’étoit l’ennemi mortel de la princesse. . . . c’étoit la raison qui faisoit qu’elle ne sortoit jamais en plein midi, qu’elle ne se levoit qu’au coucher du soleil, et qu’elle ne se couchoit qu’à son lever.” *Ibid.*, 70-72.

¹²⁰ Burke, 49.

Colbert. Thanks largely to Colbert's efforts, the cultural system established under Mazarin would be transformed into a vast state enterprise under the personal reign of Louis XIV, employing a team of painters, sculptors, architects, engravers, medalists, poets, historiographers, landscape designers, musicians, and other artists to represent the king's absolutist authority within the public sphere. Just a few months after declaring his intention to govern alone, Louis XIV ordered the arrest of his former *surintendant des finances* (Superintendent of Finances) Nicolas Fouquet, the man that many contemporaries had expected to succeed Mazarin as the king's chief minister.¹²¹ In the months leading up to Fouquet's arrest, Louis XIV and Colbert had grown suspicious of the *surintendant*, whose extravagant spending led the king to suspect him of embezzling funds earmarked for the royal coffers.¹²² Fouquet's eventual arrest on September 5, 1661 came just weeks after the king had attended a magnificent *fête* held in his honor at the *surintendant's* newly constructed residence, the château de Vaux-le-Vicomte. With its great dome and extraordinary formal gardens, Vaux-le-Vicomte was far grander than any of the king's own residences, a fact that challenged Louis XIV's supremacy in the cultural sphere. After a prolonged trial, Fouquet was found guilty in 1664 and sentenced to live in exile. Finding the judges' sentence too lenient, Louis XIV overruled the original sentence and condemned Fouquet to life imprisonment in the fortress of Pignerol. Four years later, Louis XIV would begin his first building campaign at the château de

¹²¹ Ian Thompson, *The Sun King's Garden: Louis XIV, André Le Nôtre and the Creation of the Gardens of Versailles* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2006), 13-15.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 15.

Versailles, using the same artist, architect, and landscape designer that Fouquet had employed at Vaux-le-Vicomte.

While a number of scholars have interpreted Louis XIV's decision to transform his father's small hunting lodge at Versailles into an immense royal palace as a direct response to the splendor of Vaux-le-Vicomte, Fouquet's château had not been the first residence to outshine the court architecture of the Sun King.¹²³ In 1654, before Fouquet had started building his château, the duchesse de Montpensier called on French architect François Le Vau to travel to Saint-Fargeau from his home in Paris to renovate the exterior of her residence. A prominent architect, François Le Vau was the brother of Louis Le Vau, the architect who would later construct Fouquet's château de Vaux-Le-Vicomte and be appointed by Louis XIV to oversee the first building campaign at Versailles. Most of François Le Vau's architectural additions focused on beautifying the façades of the interior courtyard, replacing the crumbling fifteenth-century exterior with an ornate polychrome decorative scheme composed of light-red bricks and light-grey stonework, culminating in a great sculpted pediment. Le Vau then added a grand semi-circular staircase, or *perron*, leading up to Mademoiselle's private chapel, and replaced the bulky roofs weighing down the château's medieval towers with round domes gracefully punctuated by sculpted *oeil-de-boeuf* (ox-eye) dormer windows and topped with delicate cupolas. (fig. 20) As Louis Hauteœur and Juliette Cherbuliez have both

¹²³ For example, see Claire Goldstein, *Vaux and Versailles: The Appropriations, Erasures, and Accidents That made Modern France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 32-34; Jean-Marie Pérouse de Montclos, *Vaux le Vicomte* (Paris: Éditions Scala, 2002), 19; David A. Hanser, *Architecture of France* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 277.

observed, François Le Vau's design for the courtyard façade of Montpensier's château de Saint-Fargeau was to inspire the façade that the architect's brother would design for Nicolas Fouquet (fig. 21).¹²⁴

Seeking to outdo her royal cousin, the duchesse de Montpensier commissioned François Le Vau to turn her place of exile into a palatial residence she would eventually describe as "magnificent and worthy of me."¹²⁵ Even after Louis XIV had made an example of Fouquet for his public display of magnificence, the duchesse de Montpensier continued to challenge the cultural supremacy of the French monarch, making additional improvements at Saint-Fargeau and, in late 1661, soon after Fouquet's arrest, purchased an even larger residence, the château d'Eu in Normandy (fig. 22). Yet, like Fouquet, Montpensier would once again incur the king's wrath. In 1663, Louis XIV ordered the duchesse de Montpensier to marry Alfonso VI of Portugal, a martial union through which the king hoped to secure a political alliance with the newly independent Portuguese crown. Unwilling to submit to the patriarchal authority of her cousin, the duchesse de Montpensier refused to accept the marriage proposal, an act of defiance that prompted the king to send the Grande Mademoiselle into exile once again. Although this second stint in forced exile would endure for only a year, the duchesse de Montpensier would elect to spend most of the remaining thirty years of her life outside of court society, where, as she would write in her *Mémoires*, she was free to go "to the countryside, to [her] residences,

¹²⁴ Louise Hauteœur, *Le règne de Louis XIV*, vol. 2 of *Histoire de l'architecture classique en France* (Paris: Picard, 1943), 107-108; Cherbuliez, 56.

¹²⁵ ". . . ceux qui le verront le trouveront assez magnifique et digne de moi" Montpensier, *Mémoires*, 2:308.



Figure 20. *Detail of the interior courtyard of the château de Saint-Fargeau.* Yonne, Bourgogne, France. Designed by François Le Vau. ca. 1654. Photograph by Christophe Finot. CC-BY-SA-3.0. Wikimedia Commons: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Saint-Fargeau_-_Ch%C3%A2teau_de_Saint-Fargeau_16.JPG



Figure 21. *Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte*. Maincy, France. Designed by Louis Le Vau. 1658-1661. Photograph by Jebulon. Attribution only license, via Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 22. *Château d'Eu*. Normandy, France. Photograph by Pierre André Leclercq. CC-BY-SA, via Wikimedia Commons:
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ch%C3%A2teau_d%27Eu_en_2021_\(1\)_01.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ch%C3%A2teau_d%27Eu_en_2021_(1)_01.jpg)

where one can hold court. One can build, one can find amusement.”¹²⁶ In addition to the architectural projects she would oversee during these last decades of her life, whether at Saint-Fargeau, Eu, or, after 1678, her newly acquired château de Choisy-le-Roi, the duchesse de Montpensier would also emerge as an important patron of French portraiture. Yet, unlike the portraits she had installed in her gallery at Saint-Fargeau in the 1650s, the majority of the paintings that Montpensier would commission between 1663 and 1693 would feature allegorical representations of the Grande Mademoiselle herself.

Through the pictorial genre of the *portrait historié*, the duchesse de Montpensier would subvert the heroic allegorical language that had become closely identified with the absolutist image of Louis XIV by appearing as an Amazonian queen. Whereas past *frondeurs* like Gaston d’Orléans had worked to hide their past oppositional activities in order to curry the king’s favor, Montpensier’s portraits would reclaim her identity as an *Amazone moderne* by depicting the Grande Mademoiselle with iconographical attributes that explicitly evoked her participation in the Fronde. In one of the earliest examples of these portraits, painted in the early 1660s by cousins Henri and Charles Beaubrun (fig. 23), Montpensier wears a silver satin bodice and matching skirt, a typical costume for a high-ranking lady at the court of Louis XIV. Atop the duchess’s head, however, sits a feathered headdress that recalls the plumed helmets worn by the Amazon warriors of Claude Déruet, signaling the sitter’s identity as a woman of war. Montpensier’s martial identity is further emphasized through the painting’s inclusion of two additional

¹²⁶ “Si l’on s’ennuie à la Cour, l’on ira à la campagne, à ses maisons, où l’on a une cour. On y fait bâtir, son s’y divertit.” Ibid., 4:537.

Amazonian attributes: a shield gripped in her left hand and a spear held in her right. Combining seventeenth-century vestimentary customs with Amazonian iconographical attributes, this *portrait historié* of the Grande Mademoiselle was painted around the same time that Charles Le Brun, the future *premier peintre du roi* (First Painter of the King), completed his monumental painting, *The Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander the Great*, for Louis XIV (fig. 24). Based on an episode from ancient history, Le Brun's painting depicts a group of women, including the queen of Persia, who kneel before Alexander the Great in a show of submission after learning of the defeat of their king, Darius III, at the hands of Alexander's Macedonian army. Portrayed with Louis XIV's own facial features, the figure of Alexander the Great appears as an allegorical representation of the French monarch, whose patriarchal authority and subjugation of the women of the Fronde is pictorially asserted through the submission of the Persian queen and her female retinue. By retrieving the spear and the shield with which *frondeuses* like the Grande Mademoiselle had fought against the armies of Cardinal Mazarin—both on the battlefield and in the pages of *mazarinades*—the duchesse de Montpensier challenged Le Brun's allegorical narrative of Louis XIV's patriarchal dominance through her own *portrait historié*, reprising her role as an *Amazone moderne* prepared to contest the authority of the new Alexander within the representational public sphere.

In 1668, Louis XIV commissioned the *premier architecte du roi* (First Architect of the King), Louis Le Vau, to transform the small hunting pavilion constructed at Versailles by the king's father, Louis XIII, into a majestic royal residence. While construction work would continue at the site over the next several decades, French court

society had already begun to migrate from Paris to the château de Versailles by the 1670s, culminating in Louis XIV's decision to permanently relocate his government and the royal court to Versailles in 1682. With the emergence of Versailles, both as an architectural embodiment of royal absolutism and, as Peter Burke has remarked, as a "social world," the large number of courtiers who had once flocked to Montpensier's subversive counter-court began to dwindle.¹²⁷ Yet, while the patriarchal and cultural hegemony of Louis XIV's absolutist system prevented the duchess from ever truly attaining the gynocratic empire that had "so much occupied [her] mind," the portraits that Montpensier would commission in this later period of her life reveal that she never stopped pursuing the oppositional strategies that were so central to her identity as a *frondeuse*, strategies she would continue to pursue up until her death in 1693.¹²⁸ In one of the most important examples of these later portraits, the duchesse de Montpensier would once again reprise her role as an Amazonian queen by appearing in the guise of the goddess Minerva, an Olympian deity whose traditional iconographical attributes, as we examined in Chapter I, were frequently incorporated into visual depictions of ancient and modern Amazons alike. Painted by the Netherlandish artist Pierre Bourguignon in 1672 (fig. 25), the portrait asserts the Amazonian identity of the forty-five-year-old duchess even more explicitly than had the Beaubrun portrait by presenting Montpensier in antique costume, recalling the chiton she wore in the illustrated Mazarinade, *Vive le Roy, Point de Mazarin*. Donning a plumed bronze helmet adorned with the figure of an owl, the

¹²⁷ Burke, 87-91.

¹²⁸ Montpensier, *Mémoires*, 1:140.

avian symbol of Minerva, Montpensier holds a large pike in her left hand, beside which lies a shield emblazoned with the face of Medusa. Whereas Louis XIV had been depicted as Jupiter stomping on a shield bearing the face of Medusa to evoke his subjugation of the *frondeuses*, Montpensier's portrait subverts this iconography of patriarchal authority by turning the Gorgon motif into a symbol of her identity as an Amazonian queen. Unlike earlier portraits of the Grande Mademoiselle, which were only viewed by visitors to her counter-court, Bourguignon's portrait of the duchesse de Montpensier was submitted to the *académie royale de peinture et de sculpture* (Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture), allowing Montpensier's strategy of monarchical opposition to infiltrate the cultural system of Louis XIV.¹²⁹ By using her own image to contest the authority of the French monarchy, the duchesse de Montpensier would serve as a model for other daughters and granddaughters of the Fronde, including the French-born princess, Marie Jeanne Baptiste de Nemours, Duchess of Savoy. By traveling south of the Alps to the duchy of Savoy, this daughter of the Fronde, as will be examined in the following chapter, would gain access to the crown that had always eluded the Grande Mademoiselle.

¹²⁹ Goodman, "Minerva Revivified," 80.



Figure 23. *Portrait of Anne-Marie-Louise d'Orléans, duchesse de Montpensier.* Henri and Charles Beaubrun and workshop. 1660s. Oil on canvas. Musée Carnavalet - Histoire de Paris, Paris. Public Domain, CC0 1.0.



Figure 24. *The Queens of Persia at the Feet of Alexander the Great.* Charles Le Brun. 1660-1661. Oil on canvas. Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles, France. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 25. *Portrait of Anne-Marie-Louise d'Orléans, duchesse de Montpensier.* Pierre Bourguignon. 1672. Oil on canvas. Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles, France. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

CHAPTER III

Madama Reale: Daughter of the Fronde, Duchess-Regent of Savoy

Between 1701 and 1714, Europe was embroiled in the War of the Spanish Succession, a bloody conflict that saw most of Europe's leading powers challenge the expansionist ambitions of Louis XIV after the French king had successfully maneuvered to place his own grandson on the Spanish throne. It was during this lengthy conflict that some of the eighteenth century's most revered generals and field marshals, like Prince Eugene of Savoy, the Duke of Villars, and the Duke of Marlborough, secured their place in military history. Yet, while these illustrious military men were taking to the battlefield, a French-born princess and daughter of a notorious *frondeur* would assume a central role in the political and diplomatic progression of the war. A half-century after the duchesse de Montpensier had participated in a military rebellion against the French crown, Marie Jeanne Baptiste de Nemours, now known as *Madama Reale*, would engage with Louis XIV as the *de facto* ruler of her adoptive state, the duchy of Savoy. While her gender had precluded her participation in French political life, the French-born princess would attain the political authority that had eluded *frondeuses* like the duchesse de Montpensier by pursuing her strategies of monarchical opposition outside of France's borders. Once beyond the reach of the French monarchical state, *Madama Reale* would appropriate the visual language of absolutist kingship developed under Louis XIV to represent her own political authority within the representational public sphere. In this chapter, we will explore how this daughter of the Fronde exported the counter-court model of the

duchesse de Montpensier to the ducal court of Turin, appropriating the cultural foundations of Louis XIV's monarchical image to legitimize her own identity as a female sovereign. Through our analysis of these cultural strategies, this chapter will also shed light on the formative role that Marie Jeanne Baptiste de Nemours played in disseminating French absolutist culture beyond the court of Louis XIV.

On January 14, 1664, only ten months into her tenure as Duchess of Savoy, Françoise Madeleine d'Orléans—the younger half-sister of the duchesse de Montpensier—died childless at the young age of fifteen, leaving her husband, Charles Emmanuel II, Duke of Savoy, without a consort. While formally a fief of the Holy Roman Empire, the ducal state of Savoy (fig. 26), which comprised the present-day Italian regions of Piedmont and the Aosta valley and the present-day French prefectures of Chambéry, Annency, and Nice, was an autonomous European power under the dominion of the Savoyard dynasty.¹³⁰ In spite of its territorial autonomy, however, the duchy of Savoy's position as a small state on the doorstep of the mighty and increasingly bellicose kingdom of France had compelled Charles Emmanuel II and his mother, as Duchess-Regent of Savoy, to align themselves with Louis XIV's political interests, effectively turning Savoy into a client state of its powerful transalpine neighbor.¹³¹ To help ensure the continued loyalty and submission of the Savoyard state, whose strategic location as a buffer between the French kingdom and the Spanish-controlled duchy of Milan was of great geopolitical importance to France, Louis XIV had sent his own

¹³⁰ Christopher Storrs, *War, Diplomacy and the Rise of Savoy, 1690-1720* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1-3.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

cousin, Françoise Madeleine d'Orléans, to marry the twenty-nine-year-old Charles Emmanuel II of Savoy in 1663.¹³² Thus, with the death of Françoise Madeleine in January 1664, Louis XIV set out to find another French princess to replace his late cousin at the Savoyard court in Turin as duchess of Savoy.

The French king turned to his *frondeuse* cousin, the duchesse de Montpensier, who, as we saw in the previous chapter, was by this time already in exile for refusing to marry the last candidate that Louis XIV had proposed to her, Alfonso VI of Portugal. Unsurprisingly, the Grande Mademoiselle would refuse this proposal as well, writing in her *Mémoires* that she had avoided discussing the death of her half-sister Françoise Madeline d'Orléans with her family as she had “no desire for people to bring up the idea of me being married to M. de Savoie.”¹³³ Instead of waiting for Louis XIV to name his new wife, however, Charles Emmanuel II surprised his contemporaries when he announced his decision to marry his French-born cousin, Marie Jeanne Baptiste de Nemours (fig. 27). Born in Paris in 1644 to Charles Amadeus, Duke of Nemours and Élisabeth de Bourbon-Vendôme, Marie Jeanne Baptiste had first met Charles Emmanuel II in 1659 when she was brought to Turin by her mother to present herself as a possible marriage candidate. The young duke of Savoy, who had evidently wished to marry his

¹³² Robert Oresko, “Maria Giovanna Battista of Savoy-Nemours (1644-1724): daughter, consort, and Regent of Savoy,” in *Queenship in Europe, 1660-1815: The Role of the Consort*, ed. Clarissa Campbell Orr (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 20; Marie M. Léoutre, *Serving France, Ireland and England: Ruvigny, Earl of Galway, 1648-1720* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2018), 63.

¹³³ “. . . j'aimai mieux n'avoir point de commerce par lettre . . . et même n'en avoir nul en cette cour-là, n'ayant point d'envie que l'on parlât de nouveau de me marier avec M. de Savoie .” Montpensier, *Mémoires*, 3:581.

French cousin since that first encounter, was prevented from marrying Marie Jeanne Baptiste by his mother, Christine de France, who knew that the union would displease Louis XIV. Whereas the French king wanted the future duchess of Savoy to be a loyal and obedient member of the royal family, Marie Jeanne Baptiste, warned Cardinal Mazarin, was “ambitious, volatile, haughty and inclined to command.”¹³⁴ Worse still, from Louis XIV’s perspective, Marie Jeanne Baptiste came from a family of *frondeurs*, including her father, the Duke of Nemours, who, in 1652, was killed in a duel with Marie’s maternal uncle, the Duke of Beaufort, another *frondeur* and ally of the duchesse de Montpensier.¹³⁵ By 1664, however, Charles Emmanuel’s mother had died, and the duke was free to marry the *frondeur*’s daughter. Thus, on May 20, 1665, against the wishes of Louis XIV, Charles Emmanuel II and Marie Jeanne Baptiste were married in the Savoyard capital of Turin (fig. 28).

During the first years of her tenure as Duchess of Savoy, Marie Jeanne Baptiste, now addressed by her Italianized name, *Maria Giovanna Battista*, devoted much of her time to performing the traditional duties of a female consort. Within a year of her marriage to the Duke of Savoy, Maria Giovanna Battista had given birth to a son and heir, fulfilling the principal expectations set for her by the patriarchal dynastic conventions of the day. After the birth of their son, Victor Amadeus, the duchess’s

¹³⁴ “. . . carattere ambizioso, volitivo, altero e propenso al comando.” Giuliana Brugnelli Biraghi and Maria Bianca Denoyé Pollone, *Maria Giovanna Battista di Savoia-Nemours: la seconda madama reale* (Turin: Gribaudo, 1996), 23.

¹³⁵ Christian Kühner, “Mediation and Reconciliation among Seventeenth-Century French High Aristocrats,” in *Cultures of Conflict Resolution in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Stephen Cummins and Laura Kounine (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016), 119-120



Figure 26. *Map of the seventeenth-century territories of Savoy (green), overlaid on a twenty-first-century map of Europe. Author: Fay2. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.*



Figure 27. *Marie-Jeanne-Baptiste de Nemours, Duchess of Savoy.* Robert Nanteuil (after Laurent du Sour). 1678. Engraving. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Public Domain. Credit line: Gift of Lev Tsitrin, 2000.



Figure 28. *AVGVSTÆ TAVRINORVM PROSPECTVS* (View of Turin, capital of Savoy). Giovanni Tommaso Borgonio. ca. 1668. Etching. Topographical Collection of George III, King of Great Britain. British Library, London. Public domain. <http://explore.bl.uk/BLVU1:LSCOP-ALL:BL01004947387>

husband spent most of his time in the company of his various mistresses, including, for a time, Cardinal Mazarin's niece Hortense Mancini.¹³⁶ Meanwhile, Maria Giovanna Battista, having successfully performed her procreative duty, was left to live out the rest of her days at the royal palace of Turin, devoting herself to ceremonial functions and perhaps one day retiring to a convent. This passive apolitical existence epitomized the life of the female consort in much of seventeenth-century Europe, and would have likely defined Maria Giovanna Battista's own tenure as duchess-consort of Savoy if not for the unforeseen events of 1675. On June 12 of that year, after ten years of marriage, Charles Emmanuel II died unexpectedly at the age of forty. While the ducal couple's son would officially succeed the late duke as Victor Amadeus II, the nine-year-old boy was too young to assume the reins of government at the time of his father's death. Thus, in the moments before his death, Charles Emmanuel II called upon his wife to rule the Savoyard state *pro tempore*, naming Maria Giovanna Battista "regent with absolute power."¹³⁷ At thirty-one years old, this daughter of the Fronde was now the ruler of a state enmeshed in a complex political, as well as cultural, relationship with her native France, a kingdom whose monarchical regime had been openly challenged by the duchess's own family just twenty-five years earlier. In spite of Maria Giovanna Battista's *frondeur* lineage, the all-powerful Louis XIV fully expected Savoy's duchess-regent to behave as the French king's dutiful subject and entrust state affairs to an *homme d'état*, as his mother, queen-regent Anne of Austria, had done with Mazarin during the Sun King's

¹³⁶ Oresko, "Maria Giovanna Battista," 25-26.

¹³⁷ ". . . reggente con il potere assoluto." Biraghi and Pollone, 95.

minority.¹³⁸ Much to the French king's displeasure, Maria Giovanna Battista would instead take full control of the Savoyard state as *Madama Reale*, refusing to consent to the intrusion of patriarchal authority. Over the course of her nine-year regency, Savoy's Madama Reale would pursue an ambitious program of political, diplomatic, and cultural reforms aimed at reasserting Savoyard dynastic sovereignty and challenging the political, cultural, and patriarchal hegemony of Louis XIV's regime.

Maria Giovanna Battista was not the first duchess-regent of Savoy to assume full control of the dukedom's state affairs; nor, in fact, was Maria Giovanna Battista the first French princess to hold the title of Madama Reale of Savoy. Between 1637 and 1648, the mother of Charles Emmanuel II—indeed, the same mother who was to forbid Charles Emmanuel from marrying Maria Giovanna Battista in 1659—had served as duchess-regent of Savoy. Also known as Madama Reale, Maria Giovanna Battista's predecessor as duchess-regent was born Christine Marie de France, daughter of French king Henri IV and Marie de' Medici. Aunt to both Louis XIV and the duchesse de Montpensier, Christine de France, like all of Henri IV's daughters, was destined from birth to serve as a tool of French foreign policy via an eventual marital alliance with a European prince. The French princess's date with matrimonial destiny came quickly—in a ceremony held on her thirteenth birthday, February 10, 1619, the young Christine de France was married to Victor Amadeus, prince of Piedmont, the son and heir of Savoyard duke Charles Emmanuel I.¹³⁹ With the death of the reigning Savoyard duke in 1630, Christine's

¹³⁸ Oresko, "Maria Giovanna Battista," 22.

¹³⁹ Toby Osborne, *Dynasty and Diplomacy in the Court of Savoy: Political Culture and the Thirty Years' War* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 47-48.

husband ascended to the ducal throne as Victor Amadeus I of Savoy, marking the beginning of a reign whose unanticipated brevity stands, in hindsight, as a curious harbinger of the short-lived reign of the duke's son and eventual successor, Charles Emmanuel II. For, like Maria Giovanna Battista several decades later, Christine de France would be named regent of Savoy following the premature death of her husband in 1637.¹⁴⁰ During her eleven-year regency, Christine de France, or Madama Reale, worked to advance the cultural prestige of the Savoyard state through her extensive artistic and architectural patronage. As the daughter of Henri IV and the sister of France's reigning monarch, Louis XIII, Christine created an image of Savoyard ducal authority based on French models of kingship, introducing new forms of royal portraiture and palatial architecture to the ducal court of Turin.

The French stylistic and iconographical traditions embraced by Christine de France to represent her authority as a female ruler during her regency would have an immediate and marked influence on Maria Giovanna Battista's own strategies of monarchical self-representation following the proclamation of her regency in 1675. Almost immediately after the death of her husband, Savoy's new Madama Reale, Maria Giovanna Battista, commissioned court artist Giovanni Battista Brambilla to paint a large canvas depicting the late duke of Savoy riding on horseback alongside the new Savoyard duke, Madama Reale's nine-year-old son, Victor Amadeus II (fig. 29). This equestrian

¹⁴⁰ Robert Oresko, "The House of Savoy in search for a royal crown in the seventeenth century," in *Royal and Republican Sovereignty in Early Modern Europe: Essays in memory of Ragnhild Hatton*, ed. Robert Oresko, G. C. Gibbs, and H. M. Scott (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 308.

portrait of dynastic succession was designed to be displayed alongside an equally monumental companion piece, the execution of which Madama Reale tasked to a different court painter, Giovanni Luigi Buffi. For this second canvas, Buffi was asked to paint a majestic portrait of Savoy's new ruler, Madama Reale (fig. 30). Rather than appearing alongside her son and late husband in a traditional family portrait, Madama Reale had herself represented separately to assert her position as the absolute ruler of the Savoyard state. In Brambilla's portrait of Charles Emmanuel II and Victor Amadeus II, the late duke and his son appear on horseback within a dimly lit landscape, presenting few of the iconographical attributes that one would expect to find in a portrait of a seventeenth-century monarch. Indeed, if not for the coat of arms branded on the hindquarters of Charles Emmanuel's horse and the Savoyard crosses adorning the late duke's baton, one might confuse the two sitters in Brambilla's painting for a pair of noblemen or military officers. Buffi's portrait of Maria Giovanna Battista, by contrast, shows Madama Reale in her role as the absolute monarch of Savoy. Whereas the front legs of the horses mounted by Charles Emmanuel and Victor Amadeus are slightly elevated above the ground, Madama Reale pulls the reins of her steed as she ascends into a full levade and rises above the expansive landscape of her terrestrial domain. Surrounded by the cloud-filled sky of the celestial realm, Madama Reale is greeted by a winged figure, an allegory of Fame, who presents the regent with a crown of laurels and sounds the trumpet of renown, heralding the magnificence of her reign.

The iconographical scheme seen in Buffi's portrait of Madama Reale was first developed by Peter Paul Rubens in the 1620s, most notably in the Flemish painter's

allegorical equestrian portraits of the Spanish kings Philip II (posthumous portrait) and Philip IV (fig. 31). During the reign of Louis XIV, this hybrid pictorial genre, combining the allegorical language of history painting with the tradition of equestrian portraiture, became an integral part of the iconographic repertoire used in visual representations of the king's absolutist identity. In 1673, for example, French artist Pierre Mignard had employed this iconographic scheme in an equestrian portrait of Louis XIV (fig. 32), depicting the French monarch atop a rearing horse and receiving a crown of laurels from a winged figure of Victory. Set within a landscape showing the king's victorious siege at the Dutch fortress of Maastricht, Mignard's painting was eventually sent to the Savoyard court in Turin where it was almost certainly seen by Madama Reale.¹⁴¹ Yet, in addition to drawing from visual representations of Louis XIV, Madama Reale also based her monarchical self-image on the monumental equestrian portraits painted for her predecessor, Christine de France. In the early 1660s, Christine had employed the Lorrainian painter Charles Dauphin to paint her portrait (fig. 33) using this allegorical equestrian scheme that had hitherto been exclusively reserved for male sovereigns—with one exception: Rubens' allegorical equestrian portrait of Christine's mother, Marie de' Medici (fig. 34).

Informed by the literary tradition of the *femme forte*, Christine de France's equestrian portraits combined iconographical attributes of masculine sovereignty, such as the rearing horse and the winged Fame, with Amazonian imagery. Recalling the Amazon

¹⁴¹ Louis-Etienne Dussieux, *Les artistes français à l'étranger, recherches sur leurs travaux et sur leur influence en Europe précédées d'un essai sur les origines et le développement des arts en France* (Paris, 1856), 378-379.



Figure 29. *Equestrian portrait of Charles Emmanuel II of Savoy with his son and successor, Victor Amadeus II of Savoy.* Giovanni Battista Brambilla. 1675. Oil on canvas. Museo Civico d'Arte Antica, Palazzo Madama, Turin, Italy. CC BY-NC-ND 3.0. Credit: Fondazione Torino Musei 2015. <https://www.palazzomadamatorino.it/it/le-collezioni/catalogo-delle-opere-online/dipinto-232>



Figure 30. *Equestrian Portrait of Maria Giovanna Battista, Duchess of Savoy (born Marie Jeanne Baptiste de Nemours).* Giovanni Luigi Buffi. 1675. Oil on canvas. Museo Civico d'Arte Antica, Palazzo Madama, Turin, Italy. CC BY-NC-ND 3.0. Credit: Fondazione Torino Musei 2015. <https://www.palazzomadamatorino.it/it/le-collezioni/catalogo-delle-opere-online/dipinto-120>



Figure 31. *Allegorical equestrian portrait of Philip IV, king of Spain.* Spanish copy of an original work painted by Peter Paul Rubens in 1628 and lost in a fire in 1734. ca. 1645 (copy); 1628 (lost original). Oil on canvas. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy. CC BY-SA 4.0. Credit: Ministero della Cultura.

<https://catalogo.beniculturali.it/detail/HistoricOrArtisticProperty/0900129543>



Figure 32. *Allegorical equestrian portrait of Louis XIV crowned by Fame.* Pierre Mignard. ca. 1674. Oil on canvas. Galleria Sabauda, Musei Reali Torino, Turin, Italy. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. Credit: Ministero della Cultura.
https://museireali.beniculturali.it/catalogo-online/#/dettaglio/137983_Ritratto%20di%20Luigi%20XIV%20incoronato%20dalla%20Fama



Figure 33. *Allegorical equestrian portrait of Christine de France, Duchess of Savoy.* Charles Dauphin. ca. 1660. Oil on canvas. Castello di Racconigi, Racconigi, Italy. CC BY-SA 4.0. Credit: Ministero della Cultura.
<https://catalogo.beniculturali.it/detail/HistoricOrArtisticProperty/0100399651>



Figure 34. *Allegorical equestrian portrait of Marie de' Medici at the triumph of Juliers*, part of the Marie de' Medici cycle for the Palais du Luxembourg. Peter Paul Rubens. 1621-1625. Oil on canvas. Musée du Louvre, Paris. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

paintings of Charles Dauphin's fellow Lorrainian painter, Claude Déruet, the equestrian portraits of Christine de France represented the Savoyard regent in a flowing chiton fastened beneath an antique cuirass. Donning a brilliant feather-crested helmet, the regent brandishes a sword in her right hand and, with her left arm, holds up the shield of Minerva emblazoned with Medusa's severed head. Prefiguring the Amazonian imagery that would be adopted by the regent's niece, the duchesse de Montpensier, in the *frondeuse's* cultural strategy of monarchical opposition, the portrait of the Christine de France served to legitimize the monarchical authority of Savoy's female ruler by presenting her as a new Penthesilea or Hippolyta. Thus, when Christine's successor, Maria Giovanna Battista, commissioned an equestrian portrait of her own to assert her monarchical legitimacy, Savoy's new Madama Reale also had herself depicted as an Amazonian queen—cuirass, chiton, feather-crested helmet, and sword in hand. Whereas the Amazonian themes that had served to assert women's political and military prowess during the Fronde had been confined to the printed pages of Mazarinades or the walls of Mademoiselle's counter-court at Saint-Fargeau, the use of this iconography in the formal state portraits of two consecutive *Madame reali* brought the literary ideal of the modern *femme forte* into the public representational sphere of the Savoyard court.

In spite of the iconographical similarities between the equestrian portraits of Christine de France and Maria Giovanna Battista, however, the paintings were commissioned in pursuit of contrasting political objectives. Proud of her identity as a *fille de France*, Christine de France had maintained a close personal and diplomatic relationship with the kings of France—her brother Louis XIII and nephew Louis XIV—

throughout her regency, forming a military alliance with her French kinsmen and allowing French troops to use her duchy as a staging area during the Franco-Spanish war.¹⁴² In frequent communication with her royal nephew's chief minister, Cardinal Mazarin, Christine de France, we may recall, had intervened to prevent her son Charles Emmanuel II from marrying Maria Giovanna Battista after the cardinal-minister advised against the match. It was only after the death of Christine de France, and the sudden passing of the duke's first wife—a candidate that Louis XIV had personally proposed to the late duchess-regent—that Charles Emmanuel was free to marry the ambitious Maria Giovanna Battista. Thus, while Christine de France's equestrian portrait adopted certain Amazonian themes from Rubens' *portraits historiés* of the regent's mother, Marie de' Medici, the motifs were but elements of a larger program of French-inspired cultural patronage designed to parade the regent's close dynastic and diplomatic ties with the Bourbon monarchy. By contrast, Maria Giovanna Battista's equestrian portrait signals the return of Montpensier's *Amazone moderne*, appropriating the visual language of French royal absolutism to identify Madama Reale, not as a faithful vassal of the Sun King, but as the feared enemy of patriarchal authority. Soon after the completion of Buffi's equestrian portrait of Madama Reale, Ennemond Servien, Louis XIV's ambassador to the court of Turin, informed his sovereign of the new regent's political ambitions: "she . . . makes it known to her ministers that she wants to be absolute."¹⁴³ Over the course of her

¹⁴² Oresko, "The House of Savoy," 306-309.

¹⁴³ "Elle . . . faict connestre dans les occasions à ses ministers qu'elle veut ester absolue." Letter from Ennemond Servien, August 10, 1675, *Correspondance Politique des Consuls/Sardaigne*, vol. 65, *Archives des Affaires Etrangères*.

regency, Madama Reale would strive to establish herself as an absolute ruler by challenging the cultural and patriarchal hegemony of Louis XIV's regime and asserting the political autonomy of the Savoyard state.

Madama Reale's first major act of political opposition against Louis XIV's government was to strengthen Savoy's diplomatic ties with the Habsburg imperial court of Vienna, a long-standing enemy of the French monarchy. The first four years of Madama Reale's regency was to coincide with the final years of the Franco-Dutch War, a conflict in which Savoy's regent would not only maintain military neutrality—in contrast to the pro-French alliances forged by her predecessor, Christine de France—but would also receive diplomatic envoys from Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, two states that were both at war with the French kingdom.¹⁴⁴ Madama Reale sought to further disentangle herself from French control through her cultural enterprises. In 1678, Madama Reale founded the *Accademia dei Pittori, Scultori e Architetti* (Academy of Painters, Sculptors, and Architects) in Turin, a state-sponsored art and architecture academy modeled after the French *académie royale de peinture et de sculpture*.¹⁴⁵ Rather than relying on imported French artists and architects, the regent's art academy would allow her to train local artists whose talents she could draw on to advance the cultural prestige of her duchy. Two years later, Madama Reale established the first literary academy in Savoy, an institution through which she would aim to recreate the femicentric

¹⁴⁴ Oresko, "Maria Giovanna Battista," 32-33.

¹⁴⁵ Aurora Laurenti, *Intagli rococò: professionalità ed elaborazione del gusto negli interni del Palazzo Reale di Torino* (Turin: Accademia University Press, 2020), 9.

literary culture of the Parisian *salons* where she had spent her youth.¹⁴⁶ Unlike the patriarchal culture of Louis XIV's absolutist system, the literary gatherings frequented by Madama Reale during the early 1660s in Paris provided the future regent with a model of female government, most notably through the circulation of the duchesse de Montpensier's *Histoire de la Princesse de Paphlagonie*. As regent of Savoy, Madama Reale could construct her own version of the Grande Mademoiselle's utopian queendom of Paphlagonie, a gynocratic state beyond the patriarchal control of the Sun King.

Although Madama Reale's son Victor Amadeus II, the *de jure* duke of Savoy, had reached the legal age of majority by 1679, and thus was entitled to assume personal control of the Savoyard state, the duchess-regent was determined to maintain her position of authority. Finally, in 1684, the now eighteen-year-old Victor Amadeus II, with the backing of Madama Reale's former ministers, compelled his mother to relinquish control of the state and banished her from the royal palace of Turin.¹⁴⁷ Following her expulsion from court, Madama Reale took up residence in the nearby *casaforte degli Acaja*, a medieval castle that the former regent would transform into her own center of cultural life and a secondary seat of political power. Though no longer the ruler of Savoy, Madama Reale would use the network of informants she had built up over the course of her tenure to exert her influence over political and diplomatic affairs. In the years following her banishment from court, the relationship between Madama Reale and her son, Duke Victor Amadeus II, started to improve, and the young duke of Savoy would begin to rely on his

¹⁴⁶ Oresko, "Maria Giovanna Battista," 29-31.

¹⁴⁷ Oresko, "Maria Giovanna Battista," 37.

mother's political counsel.¹⁴⁸ In her role as the dowager duchess of Savoy, Madama Reale would use a combination of political, cultural, and diplomatic strategies in an attempt to secure the one prize that had continued to elude her: a royal crown.

While her predecessor, Christine de France, had endeavored to elevate her duchy into a kingdom through her alliance with the French crown, Madama Reale would attempt to gain royal status by turning against Louis XIV in favor of the Sun King's great rival, the Habsburg Emperor Leopold I. Thus, when in 1688, Emperor Leopold I formed the League of Augsburg, an alliance of European powers—including the Holy Roman Empire, England, Spain, and the Dutch Republic—sembled to push back against the expansionist ambitions of Louis XIV, Victor Amadeus II, under the advice of his mother, joined the anti-French alliance.¹⁴⁹ When, after nine bloody years of war against France, the Habsburg Empire declined to elevate its Savoyard fief into a kingdom, Madama Reale worked to confer royal status, if not upon herself, then on her beloved granddaughters, Maria Adélaïde and Maria Luisa.¹⁵⁰ Without a daughter of her own, Madama Reale saw in her two granddaughters two ambitious young women like herself whom she hoped to place in positions of political authority. In 1697, the duchess negotiated a marriage between Maria Adélaïde and Louis, duc de Bourgogne, the grandson of Louis XIV and second in the line of French royal succession—a match that Madama Reale hoped would one day place her granddaughter on the French throne.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Storrs, 1-2.

¹⁵⁰ Oresko, "Maria Giovanna Battista," 39.

¹⁵¹ Tragically, in February 1712, both Maria Adélaïde and her husband, the duc de Bourgogne, died from measles while at the château de Fontainebleau.

On November 1, 1700, Charles II, the last Habsburg king of Spain, died with no children to succeed him. Upon the Spanish king's death, the Habsburg Emperor Leopold I expected his son, Archduke Charles of Austria, to ascend to the Spanish throne as a member of the Austrian branch of the Habsburg dynasty. Unbeknownst to the Austrian Habsburgs, however, Charles II had designated Louis XIV's grandson, Philippe, Duke d'Anjou, as his successor, a revelation that would plunge the anti-French states of the League of Augsburg back into war with France in 1701. In the ensuing conflict, which would become known as the War of the Spanish Succession, Madama Reale saw an opportunity to achieve her royal ambitions by playing the warring kings of Europe against one another. Through her negotiations with Louis XIV, Madama Reale managed to arrange a marriage between her granddaughter Maria Luisa and the Sun King's grandson, the new Spanish king, Philip V.¹⁵² With her granddaughter Maria Luisa now queen of Spain, Madama Reale turned her attention once again to elevating the duchy of Savoy into a kingdom through her military alliance with Louis XIV's enemy, the Austrian Habsburgs. In 1713, as a reward for her son's military support in the War of the Spanish Succession, the House of Savoy was granted sovereignty over the kingdom of Sicily.¹⁵³ As the queen-mother of the new Savoyard kingdom of Sicily, this daughter of the Fronde now shared the same royal status as Louis XIV.

With her new royal position, Madama Reale commissioned Sicilian architect Filippo Juvarra to transform her personal residence in Turin into a magnificent royal

¹⁵² Oresko, "Maria Giovanna Battista," 39.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 40.

palace based on the absolutist architectural language of the château de Versailles. Named the Palazzo Madama (fig. 35), the royal palace of this daughter of the Fronde would be adorned with frescoes by artists trained at her *accademia dei pittore*, creating a monument to her reign that would endure long after her death in 1724. While Palazzo Madama's façade was directly inspired by the garden façade of the château de Versailles (fig. 36), the interior of Madama Reale's palatial residence would subvert the patriarchal order asserted by the heroic pictorial narratives decorating Louis XIV's royal palace by depicting herself, a daughter of the Fronde, as the new sovereign of the Sun. On the ceiling of one of the staterooms in the Palazzo Madama, Madama Reale appears in a fresco by court artist Domenico Guidobono heralding the arrival of the sun as she commandeers the chariot of Apollo (fig. 37). In a pictorial scheme based on Charles de la Fosse's allegorical representation of Louis XIV as Apollo in his chariot on the ceiling of the *Salon d'Apollon* at Versailles (fig. 38), Guidobono shows Madama Reale as the new god of the Sun as a retinue of Olympian deities, including Jupiter, Aurora, and the dethroned Apollo himself, crown the Savoyard queen-mother with wreaths of laurel. By dethroning Apollo, the Olympian deity most closely identified in French royal imagery with Louis XIV, Madama Reale asserted her political triumph within the representational sphere of absolutist visual culture—a subversive cultural strategy that would be pursued within France's borders by another descendent of the Fronde: Louise-Bénédicte de Bourbon, duchesse du Maine.



Figure 35. *Palazzo Madama*. Turin, Italy. Designed by Filippo Juvarra. 1718-1721. Photography by Andbog. CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Luce_di_fine_settembre_su_Palazzo_Madama,_Torino.jpg

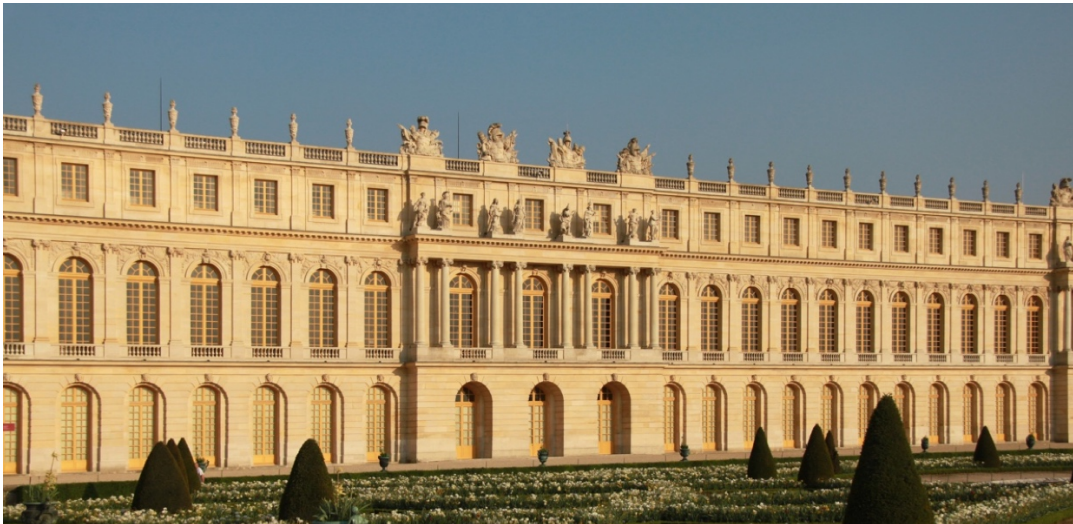


Figure 36. *Château de Versailles* (garden façade). Versailles, France. Designed by Jules Hardouin-Mansart. 1678-1684. Photograph by Cristian Bortes. CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Garden_facade_of_the_Palace_of_Versailles,_April_2011_\(11\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Garden_facade_of_the_Palace_of_Versailles,_April_2011_(11).jpg)



Figure 37. *Triumph of Maria Giovanna Battista of Savoy*, ceiling of the Camera di Madama Reale. Domenico Guidobono. 1709-1721. Fresco. Palazzo Madama, Turin, Italy. CC BY-NC-ND 3.0. Credit: Fondazione Torino Musei 2015.

https://www.palazzomadamatorino.it/sites/default/files/events/images/DSC_0084.JPG



Figure 38. *Apollo in his Chariot*, ceiling of the *Salon d'Apollon*. Charles de la Fosse. 1677-1679. Oil on canvas. Château de Versailles, Versailles, France. Photograph by Wally Gobetz. CC BY-NC-ND 2.0. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/wallyg/1587423754>

CHAPTER IV

Louise-Bénédicté de Bourbon, duchesse du Maine: Granddaughter of the Fronde and Queen of Sceaux*

***Author's note:** Sections of this chapter were first presented at the Phi Alpha Theta Pacific Northwest Regional Conference at Portland State University, April 9-10, 2021, in my conference paper "Parody, Performance, and Conspiracy in Early Eighteenth-Century France: The Subversive Court of Louise Bénédicté de Bourbon, Daughter-in-Law of the Sun King (1700–1718)."

Towards the end of December 1718, the regent of France, Philippe d'Orléans, deployed a team of musketeers and royal guardsmen to find and arrest a group of wanted conspirators. Not long before, the French police had intercepted correspondence that implicated these suspects in a plot to overthrow the regent and seize power for themselves.¹⁵⁴ The arrests took place on the morning of December 29 at a number of targeted locations. One of the principal targets of the police operation, Louise-Bénédicté, was in her Parisian apartment when the commotion unfolded. Standing at less than five feet tall, this small, unimposing woman was arrested and securely transported over 300 kilometers south-east from Paris to Burgundy where she was imprisoned in the imposing fifteenth-century château de Dijon.¹⁵⁵ Louise-Bénédicté was no ordinary prisoner. Born on December 8, 1676 as Louise-Bénédicté de Bourbon, she was a princess of the house of Condé, a branch of the French royal house of Bourbon. As a Condé, Louise-Bénédicté was a *princesse du sang*, or princess of the royal blood, the highest noble rank outside of

¹⁵⁴ Edmond Jean François Barbier, *Chronique de la Régence et du règne de Louis XV (1718–1763) ou Journal de Barbier, avocat au Parlement* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1885), 1:24.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:26-27.

the royal family.¹⁵⁶ How did a *princesse du sang* get involved in a plot to depose her own cousin, the regent, and end up imprisoned for her role in the conspiracy? To answer this question, we must examine the events that led up to her dramatic arrest. For while Louise-Bénédicte had never been involved in a political conspiracy prior to the events of 1718, the princess had devoted the past eighteen years of her life to opposing the central authority of the French monarchical state. In 1700, after the French monarchy had prevented her from attaining the social and political status she felt entitled to on account of her lineage, Louise-Bénédicte established her own rival court at Sceaux, located roughly twenty kilometers away from the royal court at Versailles. Over the next eighteen years Louise-Bénédicte would develop a subversive culture of royal opposition by commissioning and participating in a variety of visual, literary, and performative parodies of official royal culture. By situating Louise-Bénédicte within a tradition of monarchical opposition orchestrated by powerful French women like the duchesse de Montpensier and the Duchess of Savoy, the following two chapters will examine how the princess used theater, poetry, painting, architecture, music, and parodies of royal emblems and protocols as instruments of a larger strategy of political opposition that would ultimately end in her arrest and imprisonment.

Louise-Bénédicte de Bourbon (fig. 39) was born on December 8, 1676 to parents Henri Jules de Bourbon, Prince de Condé and Anne of Bavaria. As the daughter of the current prince de Condé, Louise-Bénédicte was born into one of the most powerful and

¹⁵⁶ Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and Jean-François Fitou, *Saint-Simon and the Court of Louis XIV*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 121.

illustrious families in France. The Condé, or Bourbon-Condé, family was a branch of the same family that ruled the kingdom of France, the royal house of Bourbon. The first prince de Condé, Louis de Bourbon (1530-1569), was the paternal uncle of the first Bourbon king of France, Henri de Bourbon, who ascended to the throne in 1594 as Henri IV. This royal ancestry gave members of the Condé family the title of *prince* or *princesse du sang*, prince or princess of the blood, a rank that placed them above everyone at court besides the royal family.¹⁵⁷ At the time of Louise-Bénédicte's birth, the Condé family was already infamous for its difficult relationship with the French monarchy. Only twenty-six years earlier, in 1650, Louise-Bénédicte's grandfather, the celebrated French general Louis II de Bourbon, prince de Condé had participated in the Fronde alongside *frondeuses* like the duchesse de Montpensier and the duchesse de Chevreuse. Referred to as the *Grand Condé* for his great military triumphs against the Spanish during the 1640s, Louis II de Bourbon-Condé joined several other French princes in opposing the political project of the French minister Cardinal Mazarin, which sought to diminish the power of the nobility. The epic mythology that formed around the *Grand Condé*, telling the story of a great French military hero who struggled to seize the political power to which he felt entitled on account of his lineage from an upstart cardinal and foreign queen who were governing in the name of a child, would provide a model for the self-image that his granddaughter, Louise-Bénédicte, would work to cultivate.

Louise-Bénédicte's grandfather was not the only participant in the Fronde that would serve as a model for her own oppositional character and self-image. As we

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

examined in the preceding chapters, many of the participants in the Fronde were noblewomen, including Louise-Bénédicte's great-aunt, Anne-Genevieve de Bourbon, duchesse de Longueville, her maternal grandmother, Anne de Gonzague, and her distant cousin, the duchesse de Montpensier. Depicted in Mazarinades as modern Amazons, *frondeuses* like Montpensier and Longueville presented a form of martial feminine identity that would influence the oppositional political strategies later pursued by the duchesse du Maine. Profoundly shaken by the actions of the nobility during the Fronde, Louis XIV, who took sole control of the kingdom upon Mazarin's death in 1661, would devote much of his domestic policy towards building a centralized political, social, and cultural system whereby the status and privileges of each member of the nobility were determined by one's proximity to the king. First based at the royal châteaux of the Louvre and Saint-Germain-en-Laye, the king's centralized court system would begin to migrate to the château de Versailles in the 1670s. By 1682, the château de Versailles, once a small hunting lodge belonging to the king's father, Louis XIII, had been transformed into a grand architectural portrait of the Sun King's absolutist regime. Now the official site of the royal court, Versailles functioned as the social, political, cultural, and diplomatic capitol of Louis XIV's France. The princes who had once attempted to reclaim their share of political power by force during the Fronde could now only hope to secure greater privileges by currying the king's favor at court.¹⁵⁸ This system of royal patronage required the nobility to be present at the court of Versailles, which in turn allowed the monarchy to observe and control its behavior. Life at the court of Louis XIV followed a

¹⁵⁸ Cherbuliez, "A Culture of Exile," 44-45.

structured series of highly choreographed displays of royal authority, from everyday ceremonies like *le lever* to special operatic spectacles, which provided the king with a template for controlling the nobility while also rewarding obedient princes by granting them more important roles to perform before the rest of court.¹⁵⁹

When the royal court and government was officially moved to the château de Versailles in May 1682, Louise-Bénédicte was only five years old. Her grandfather, the once rebellious *Grand Condé*, had publicly humbled himself before Louis XIV and was now quietly living out the last years of his life at Chantilly. Yet, while Louise-Bénédicte's existence was shaped by the cultural hegemony of Louis XIV's reign, the legacy of the Fronde would have loomed largely over her imagination. Whether by means of military action, public defiance, art and architectural patronage, self-exile, or rejecting social and cultural conventions, the oppositional strategies of the duchesse de Montpensier, whose extensive memoirs began to circulate in the early eighteenth century, would serve as a model for Louise-Bénédicte, who, as the princess's lady-in-waiting would later recall, "had no difficulty in imagining herself a second Mademoiselle de Montpensier, riding into besieged cities at the head of a victorious army."¹⁶⁰ Indeed, by 1692, Louise-Bénédicte would find herself at the center of a battle that Montpensier had faced only decades earlier.

¹⁵⁹ Giora Sternberg, *Status Interaction during the Reign of Louis XIV* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 113-114.

¹⁶⁰ S. H. Lombardini, *Rival French Courts: The Experiences of a Lady-in-Waiting at Sceaux, at Versailles and in the Bastille* (New York: Macmillan, 1913), 125.

As the daughter of the *Grand Condé* and a *princesse du sang*, Louise-Bénédicte grew up bearing grand ambitions for her future.¹⁶¹ For a French princess like herself, the primary means of realizing her ambitions was by securing a socially advantageous marriage. In *ancien régime* France, however, the criteria for determining the quality and suitability of a potential husband were generally based, not on the desires of the unmarried princess, but on the priorities of her father.¹⁶² In the case of the duchesse de Montpensier, the former *frondeuse* enjoyed such an extraordinarily high rank as the granddaughter of Henri IV that finding a suitably credentialed match proved difficult. By the time that Louis XIV found such a match in the king of Portugal, Montpensier was thirty-three years old—twenty-five was the legal age of majority for women— independently wealthy, and without a living father to force the marriage. Even still, as we have seen, Montpensier’s refusal to consent to the marriage would end in her second exile from court. In 1692, however, Louise-Bénédicte was a fifteen-year-old princess with no legal, economic, or social means of preventing the marriage plans arranged by her father, the prince de Condé. Seeking to escape the cloud of suspicion cast upon him by his infamous predecessor, the *Grand Condé*, Louise-Bénédicte’s father used his children to establish closer ties to the monarchy through marriage and enrich his personal coffers in the process.¹⁶³ While the children of the Condé clan were not deemed socially

¹⁶¹ Catherine Cessac and Manuel Couvreur, “Introduction,” in *La Duchesse du Maine (1676–1753): Une mécène à la croisée des arts et des siècles*, ed. Catherine Cessac and Manuel Couvreur (Brussels: Editions de l’Université de Bruxelles, 2003), 7.

¹⁶² DeJean, introduction to *Against Marriage*, 3-4.

¹⁶³ Léonce de Piépape, *A Princess of Strategy: The Life of Anne Louise Bénédicte de Bourbon-Condé Duchesse du Maine*, trans. James Lewis (London: John Lane, 1911), 24-25.

or politically suitable to marry any of the king's legitimate descendants, Louis XIV was looking to arrange marriages for the many children he had conceived illegitimately with his former mistress, the marquise de Montespan. Although the king had legally legitimized his natural children starting in 1673 and accorded them a new princely rank that placed them just below the *princes du sang* in the court hierarchy, Louise-Bénédicte was nonetheless horrified by the prospect of marrying a *bâtard* born of the king's adulterous affair with his scandalous and now-disgraced mistress.¹⁶⁴ Even worse, the social status and identity of married women in *ancien régime* France was determined by the positions of their husbands, regardless of a woman's rank at birth, thus turning Louise-Bénédicte's marital arrangement into a ceremony of social demotion.¹⁶⁵ In exchange for consenting to this matrimonial mismatch, or *mésalliance*, Louise-Bénédicte's father was to be handsomely compensated by the king.¹⁶⁶ The marriage took place on May 16, 1692 at the royal chapel of Versailles in a ceremony that saw Louise-Bénédicte's identity as a Condé princess legally and symbolically transfigured into her new identity as the wife of the king's illegitimately born son, Louise-Auguste de Bourbon, duc du Maine. For the extremely ambitious Louise-Bénédicte, henceforth known as the *duchesse du Maine*, the social demotion brought about by this marriage to the socially inferior duc du Maine constituted an affront to her sense of identity, an

¹⁶⁴ Katia Béguin, "Les enjeux et les manifestations du mécénat aristocratique à l'aube du XVIIIe siècle," in Cessac and Couvreur, 24.

¹⁶⁵ Mary D. Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 91.

¹⁶⁶ Piépape, 24-25.

affront that would manifest itself in the oppositional culture she would foster over the next three decades.

Born on March 31, 1670, Louise-Bénédicte's new husband, Louise-Auguste, duc du Maine (fig. 40), was, according to most accounts, a timid and generally unremarkable individual.¹⁶⁷ Of all of Louis XIV's children, he was the favorite of the king's morganatic wife, madame de Maintenon, whose powerful behind-the-scenes influence over court life in the last decades of the Louis XIV's reign allowed the duc du Maine to benefit from the king's support.¹⁶⁸ The newly married duc and duchesse du Maine, like many princes intent on benefitting from the king's patronage, took up residence in their own apartment at the château de Versailles.¹⁶⁹ Over the course of the 1690s, the court culture of Versailles, once noted for the youthful exuberance of its *grand divertissements* and lighthearted amusements of Molière, became increasingly rigid and austere as a result of the devout madame de Maintenon's influence on the aging king. Having grown weary of this moral severity, several younger princes, like the king's nephew, Philippe II d'Orléans, and even Louis XIV's own son and heir, Louis, le Grand Dauphin, established smaller satellite courts away from the moralizing gaze of the newly devout monarchy at their châteaux of Saint Cloud and Meudon and at the Orléans family's Parisian residence, the Palais-Royal.¹⁷⁰ Harboring a similar desire for independence from the rigid

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 23.

¹⁶⁸ Cessac and Couvreur, 8.

¹⁶⁹ Philippe de Courcillon, marquis de Dangeau, *Journal du marquis de Dangeau avec les additions inédites du duc de Saint-Simon*, ed. Eudox Soulié, L. Dussieux, Philippe de Chennevières, Paul Mantz, Anatole de Montaiglon, and F. Feuillet de Conches (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1854–1860), 4:26.

¹⁷⁰ Béguin, 23.



Figure 39. *Louise-Bénédicte de Bourbon, duchesse du Maine.* Pierre Gobert. Early 18th century. Oil on canvas. Musée du Domaine départemental de Sceaux, Sceaux, France. Photograph by Jean-Pierre Dalbéra. CC BY 2.0. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dalbera/9762762444/>



Figure 40. *Louis-Auguste de Bourbon, duc du Maine.* François de Troy. 1715. Oil on canvas. Musée du Domaine départemental de Sceaux, Sceaux, France. Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

constraints imposed by court society, the duchesse de Maine was powerless to escape without the financial support of her husband.

As a result of her gender and small size, the young duchesse du Maine's intelligence and ambition went long unnoticed by the courtiers at Versailles, who commonly referred to her and her three sisters as the *poupées du sang* (dolls of the blood), a disparaging play on their titles as princesses of the blood.¹⁷¹ Contrary to the frivolous character that her nickname served to project, the duchesse du Maine devoted much of her time at Versailles to exploring her intellectual curiosity. Under the guidance of her husband's childhood tutor, the mathematician and classical scholar Nicolas de Malézieu, the duchess pursued an extensive curriculum covering such topics as Greek and Roman literature, astronomy, and Cartesian philosophy.¹⁷² Aspiring to attain a more important social, cultural, and even political role than the spousal and procreative duties for which she was primed, the duchesse du Maine rejected the devotional exercises pushed by madame de Maintenon in favor of an education in line with her future ambitions. Yet, Louise-Bénédicté did not possess a suitable theater in which to stage these ambitions, and no court, besides Malézieu's circle of friends, over which to rule. Eventually, her attempts at pushing her naturally timid husband to fight for greater authority, prestige, and autonomy attracted the disapproving attention of the *plus que reine*, madame de Maintenon. In a letter to her daughter, Maintenon complained: "The duchesse du Maine is capricious, snappish, and unmanageable. Monseigneur le Duc finds

¹⁷¹ Piépape, 36-37.

¹⁷² Charles Augustin de Sainte-Beuve, *Portraits of the Eighteenth Century: Historic and Literary*, trans. Katharine P. Wormeley (New York, 1905), 33.

her temperament extremely trying.”¹⁷³ By the end of the decade, the duchesse du Maine had resolved to escape the constraints that controlled her life at the château de Versailles, an edifice that had come to symbolize the submission of her Condé lineage and the humiliation of her unwanted marriage. Finally, in 1699, the duchesse du Maine’s plans of escape were realized when her husband made the acquisition of the château de Sceaux, a vast estate where the duchess could pursue her own social, cultural, and intellectual ambitions, unconfined by the strictures of the royal court. According to the sharp-tongued memorialist, Louis de Rouvroy, duc de Saint-Simon, a French courtier who abhorred the duc du Maine—and his wife by extension—on account of the duke’s illegitimate birth, the duc du Maine only helped finance his wife’s ambitions because he was deeply afraid of provoking her wrath.¹⁷⁴

Located about twenty kilometers outside of Versailles, the château de Sceaux (fig. 41) was built by Louis XIV’s powerful minister and *contrôleur général des finances*, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, after acquiring the domain in 1670. At the time of this initial acquisition, the domain comprised a modest baronial château set on the side of a hill. As the new residence of the king’s most powerful minister, this small structure was transformed into a grand château befitting a patron of Colbert’s status. This transformation was achieved by dramatically enlarging the château with the addition of long lateral wings extending from both ends of the original structure and into the great

¹⁷³ Thérèse Louis Latour, *Princesses, Ladies, and Adventuresses of the Reign of Louis XIV* (New York, 1924), 340.

¹⁷⁴ Louis de Rouvroy, duc de Saint-Simon, *Mémoires du duc de Saint-Simon*, ed. Adolphe Chéruel and Adolphe Regnier (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1873), 5:134.

cour d'honneur. The façade and interior spaces of the château were redesigned in the grand style of Louis XIV's château de Versailles and featured painted decorations by Charles Le Brun, Louis XIV's *premier peintre du roi* and the principal decorator of Versailles.¹⁷⁵ Le Brun's colleague, André Le Notre, the landscape designer celebrated for his formal gardens at Versailles, was also borrowed from the king's service to design the gardens of Colbert's château.¹⁷⁶ Following Colbert's death in 1683, Sceaux was inherited by the late minister's son, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, marquis de Seignelay, who continued to expand the château and commissioned the construction of its magnificent *orangerie*. The marquis de Seignelay died in 1690 and the château remained unoccupied until Colbert's heirs sold the domain to the duc du Maine in 1699 for 900,000 francs.¹⁷⁷

Within less than a year of the duke's acquisition of the property, the duchesse du Maine had moved out of her apartments at Versailles and established the château de Sceaux as her principal residence. Over the next fifteen years, the last years of the reign of Louis XIV, the duchesse du Maine would work to establish her château as the preeminent social and cultural center of France. In offering a more vibrant and festive venue of aristocratic sociability for the younger members of the nobility, the duchesse du Maine's fledgling court at Sceaux was not unique. As previously noted in this chapter, satellite courts based at the château de Meudon and at the Palais-Royal, among other venues, had already acquired reputations as important centers of aristocratic life in the

¹⁷⁵ Marc Favreau, "L'inventaire après décès de la duchesse du Maine: Etudes et commentaires," in Cessac and Couvreur, 52-53.

¹⁷⁶ Béguin, 25.

¹⁷⁷ Saint-Simon, 2:359.

last decades of Louis XIV's reign. Yet, while these alternative courts were frequented by nobles who, like the duchesse du Maine, had grown tired of the rigid protocol of Versailles, the princely patrons at the center of these circles sought neither to challenge nor to subvert the cultural and political hegemony of Louis XIV's court system, but merely to escape the royal court's moralistic constraints. The duchesse du Maine's court at Sceaux, by contrast, would look to emulate the oppositional court culture cultivated by the *frondeuse* duchesse de Montpensier at her château de Saint-Fargeau a half-century earlier. Indeed, like the Grande Mademoiselle before her, the duchesse du Maine would revive the Fronde's anti-monarchical campaign by appropriating and subverting the cultural symbols and institutions upon which the Sun King's absolutist identity was founded.

In his important study of the cultural system of the Sun King, Peter Burke shows how Louis XIV, once a young, unimposing boy whose kingship had been openly disrespected by the *frondeurs* during the regency of his mother, came to acquire and maintain a godlike identity within the first decade of his personal reign. Employing a cultural strategy Burke calls the "fabrication" of the king's image, Louis XIV's ministers enlisted a team of "image-makers", including artists, iconographers, writers, architects, and musicians, to develop a cultural language for representing the absolute power and heroic identity of the king.¹⁷⁸ One important early element of the king's cultural fabrication was the composition of his royal device. While royal iconographers occasionally included the inherited French royal emblem of the fleur-de-lys in their

¹⁷⁸ Burke, 10-11.

representations of the king, Louis XIV adopted his own personal device in the 1660s, which allowed the royal identity of the Sun King to be symbolically disseminated through prints, medals, and other forms of official imagery.¹⁷⁹ Indeed, while heraldic variations did exist, the most common version of Louis XIV's personal device shows the king in the form of the sun itself, his face, like the solar god Apollo, encircled by golden rays and soaring above the earth, his terrestrial kingdom. This cosmic imagery is reinforced by the device's inscription, Louis XIV's personal motto: *Nec pluribus impar* (Not unequal to many).¹⁸⁰

After serving as a symbol of the Sun King's status as the absolute ruler of France and master of Europe for several decades, Louis XIV's device was reappropriated by the duchesse du Maine in one of her first attempts at fabricating her own regal image as queen of Sceaux. Whereas Louis XIV's impresa had identified the monarch with the cosmic and grandiose bodies of the sun and the god Apollo, the duchess would subvert the epic scale of the king's visual rhetoric by choosing as her emblem the small and outwardly trivial form of the honeybee. The use of bees in princely heraldry was not without precedent—the Barberini, for example, an Italian noble family that had lived in Paris during its exile from Rome in the 1650s, claimed the bee as its emblem. To strip her emblem of any noble symbolism and further emphasize its derisive character, the duchesse du Maine refers to her heraldic lampoon, not as an *abeille* (the French word for

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 16.

¹⁸⁰ Hendrik Ziegler, *Louis XIV et ses ennemis: Image, propagande et contestation* (Paris: Presses universitaires de Vincennes, 2013), 29–35.

‘bee’), but by the more ignoble name of *mouche de miel* (literally, honey fly).¹⁸¹ In 1703, the duchesse du Maine took her subversion of Louis XIV’s image even further when she had her device immortalized on a gold medal (figs. 42a and 42b), appropriating the traditional medium through which the king’s device was glorified and disseminated.¹⁸² During the reign of Louis XIV, medals bearing the king’s likeness and device were cast to celebrate major events and military victories through the ceremonial glorification of the king’s image (fig. 43), and subsequently circulated throughout the kingdom and beyond in printed reproductions.¹⁸³ In contrast to these official commemorative relics, the duchess’s medal is at once a parody of the king’s self-aggrandizing ceremonial paraphernalia and a celebration of her newly established queendom at Sceaux. For while the emblem of the *mouche à miel* served to ridicule solar, Apollonian, and other forms of Louis XIV’s vainglorious iconography, the duchesse du Maine, still belittled as a *poupée du sang*, also identified with her small but fierce insect surrogate. The reverse of the medal depicts a bee flying above a landscape with a beehive visible in the background and includes the duchesse du Maine’s new motto: *Piccola si, ma fa pur gravi le ferite* (She is small, yes, but she inflicts severe wounds).¹⁸⁴ Adopted from the 1573 play *Aminta* by the Italian poet Torquato Tasso, the duchess’s motto uses the bee as a symbol of her own hidden power.¹⁸⁵ With this motto, the duchess warns would-be opponents not to

¹⁸¹ Catherine Cessac, “La Duchesse du Maine ou la Reine Didon: La mythologie mise à l’épreuve,” *Dix-Septième Siècle* 3, no. 272 (2016): 491.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Burke, 16.

¹⁸⁴ Cessac, “La Duchesse du Maine ou la Reine Didon,” 491.

¹⁸⁵ Torquato Tasso, *Aminta*, act 2, scene 1, lines 1–2.

underestimate her ambition or the measures she would take to attain what she saw as her rightful position in the kingdom.

The duchesse du Maine's heraldic medals would play a central role in her efforts to establish Sceaux as a rival court to Versailles. As part of her strategy, the duchess appropriated one of the most ancient and potent symbols of the king's authority by establishing her own chivalric order. In France, as in other European monarchies, the king stood as the grand master of the monarchy's prestigious chivalric orders, invested with the sole authority to confer knighthoods as part of a solemn ceremonial display of the monarch's divine status.¹⁸⁶ While Louis XIV had inherited the ceremonial rituals of the kingdom's most prestigious chivalric order, *l'ordre du Saint-Esprit* (Order of the Holy Spirit), the Sun King founded a new order in 1693 (fig. 44), which he named after his namesake, *l'ordre royal et militaire de Saint Louis* (Royal and Military Order of Saint Louis). The duchesse du Maine's chivalric order, however, would be named for neither the holy spirit, nor for Saint Louis, but for the duchess's devious insect alter ego, *l'Ordre de la Mouche à miel* (Order of the Honey Fly). On June 11, 1703, at the château de Sceaux, the duchess held the inaugural investiture ceremony of her newly established order. The thirty-nine knights of the Order of the Honey Fly included members of the nobility as well as important intellectuals, and, in contrast to the patriarchal conventions of the period, half of them—nineteen of the thirty-nine members, plus the duchess—were

¹⁸⁶ Guy Rowlands, *The Dynastic State and the Army Under Louis XIV: Royal Service and Private Interest 1661–1701* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 224.

women.¹⁸⁷ Instead of the Croix de Saint Louis (fig. 45), the knights of Sceaux were decorated with their own gold medals displaying the duchess's emblem (figs. 42a and 42b), which they received upon pronouncing the following oath: "Je jure par les abeilles du mont Hymette, fidélité et obéissance à la dictatrice perpétuelle de l'ordre" (I swear by the bees of Mount Hymettus that I will be loyal and obedient to the perpetual dictator of the order).¹⁸⁸ Although the chivalric ceremony and oath of obedience to the duchess, and her title of perpetual dictator, were conceived as theatrical parodies of the king's overbearing pageantry, this performance served as the opening act of what became a fifteen-year cultural and political spectacle featuring Louise-Bénédicte as its hero and the monarchy as its villain.

In the years following the creation of the *Ordre de la Mouche à miel*, the duchesse du Maine arranged a number of festivities for her and her court, from intimate concerts and literary games to elaborate theatrical performances with original music by renowned composers like Delalande.¹⁸⁹ With the château de Sceaux's growing reputation as an important cultural venue, however, it soon attracted the attention of the king, whose son, the duc du Maine, was the legal owner of the property. On a few occasions, Louis XIV personally attended the duchesse du Maine's famous *divertissements*, most notably in October 1704, which required the duchess to temper the subversive elements of her

¹⁸⁷ Marianne de Meyenbourg, "L'almanach de 1721 et l'emblème de la Mouche à miel," in Cessac and Couvreur, 163.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Cessac, "La Duchesse du Maine et la musique," in Cessac and Couvreur, 100.



Figure 41. *View of the château de Sceaux.* Unknown artist. 17th century. Pen and gray ink. Musée du Louvre, Paris. Credit: RMN-Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre) / Photograph: S. Nagy. <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl020013266>



Figure 42a. Medal of the Ordre de la Mouche à miel with the profile of the duchesse du Maine (obverse). 1703. Silver.¹ Photograph by Florian Horsthemke. CC BY 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Orden_der_Honigbiene.jpg

Inscription: L. BAR. D. SC. D. P. D. L. O. D. L. M. A. M.

[Louise, BARonne De SCeaux, Dictatrice Perpétuelle De L'Ordre De La Mouche À Miel (Louise, Baroness of Sceaux, Perpetual dictator of the Order of the Honey Fly)]



Figure 42b. Medal of the *Ordre de la Mouche à miel* with a bee and a beehive, the device of the *duchesse du Maine* (reverse). 1703. Silver.ⁱⁱ Photograph by Florian Horsthemke. CC BY 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Orden_der_Honigbiene.jpg

Inscription: *Piccola si, ma fa pur gravi le ferite*
(She is small, yes, but she inflicts severe wounds)

^{i, ii} Gold, silver, and bronze versions of the medal can still be found in private collections and at commercial galleries.



Figure 43. Medal with bust of Louis XIV (obverse) and Louis XIV's solar device (reverse). Designed by Jean Warin. 1672. Gold. The British Museum, London. © The Trustees of the British Museum. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/1612967874>



Figure 44. *Louis XIV at the Investiture Ceremony of the Military Order of Saint-Louis, May 10, 1693.* François Marot. 1710. Oil on canvas. Musée national des châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles, France. Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 45. *Grand cross of the Royal and Military Order of Saint-Louis.* Private collection. Photograph by Alexeinikolayevichromanov. CC-BY-SA-4.0., via Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ordre_de_Saint-Louis_GTColl.jpg

public cultural program.¹⁹⁰ In the meantime, however, the duchesse du Maine, having already undermined the absolutist symbolism of several iconic forms of monarchical media and ritual, including royal medals and chivalric orders, embarked on a project to reappropriate Louis XIV's artistic and architectural language of kingship, one of the most important elements of the king's public image. At her châteaux de Sceaux, a residence constructed by Louis XIV's late minister, Colbert, and decorated in a manner designed to flatter its occupant's royal patron, the duchesse du Maine hired the painter Claude III Audran to redecorate the interior's Louis XIV style iconography.¹⁹¹ Recalling the interior renovations pursued roughly a half-century earlier by the duchesse de Montpensier during her exile at Saint-Fargeau, the duchesse du Maine's decorative projects at Sceaux would assert the duchess's identity as the queen of her counter-court by subverting the visual culture of French royal absolutism.

The neo-Louis XIII-style château that greets today's visitors to Sceaux (fig. 46) would be unrecognizable to the duchesse du Maine and the knights of her chivalric order. Built in the nineteenth century, the present edifice was erected to replace the lost château of the duchesse du Maine, which was demolished between 1802 and 1803.¹⁹² Based on archival records, scholars have confirmed that Claude III Audran executed a minimum of two decorative projects for the duchesse du Maine: the redecoration of the existing

¹⁹⁰ Maurice Barthélémy, "Chaulieu à Châtenay et à Sceaux," in Cessac and Couvreur, 199.

¹⁹¹ Katie Scott, *The Rococo Interior: Decorated and Social Spaces in Early Eighteenth-century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 134.

¹⁹² Dominique Brême and Catherine Cessac, *Les Caprices de Ludovise: Un décor retrouvé de l'ancien château de Sceaux* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2019), 21.

gallery of the château, and the decoration of the duchess's *cabinet des arts et des sciences* (Cabinet of the Arts and Sciences).¹⁹³ A pair of surviving drawings in the collection of the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm reveal the central ceiling decorations that Audran conceived for both the gallery (fig. 47) and the *cabinet des arts et des sciences* (fig. 48). In both decorative schemes, Audran eschews the severe pictorial narratives commissioned by Louis XIV for his château de Versailles in favor of playful ornamental patterns suffused with festoons and frolicking animals. While the ceiling of the gallery replaced the heroic allegorical representations of Louis XIV that Colbert had commissioned during his residency with beehives and other symbols of the duchesse du Maine's identity as the queen of Sceaux, the most subversive of Audran's decorative schemes for the duchess was in the *cabinet des arts et des sciences*. Adorned with painted wall panels by Audran and stucco bas-reliefs sculpted by Jean-Baptiste Poulthier, the duchess's *cabinet* also featured a vaulted ceiling decorated with a large octagonal painting.¹⁹⁴ As can be seen in the Nationalmuseum drawing (fig. 48), the iconographical program of the *cabinet's* ceiling painting was centered around the figure of Apollo, one of the most recognizable symbols of Louis XIV's royal identity.¹⁹⁵ Rather than depicting the Sun King's Olympian alter-ego ascending triumphantly in his chariot, however, as in the *salon d'Apollon* (fig. 38) or the *bassin d'Apollon* (fig. 49) at Versailles, Audran's decorative scheme subverted Louis XIV's grand Apollonian iconography by representing

¹⁹³ Ibid., 17; Auguste Panthier, "L'appartement de la duchesse du Maine à Sceaux," *Bulletin des amis de Sceaux* (1930): 70–85.

¹⁹⁴ Brême and Cessac, 64-70.

¹⁹⁵ Burke, 39-47.

the monarch's divine proxy as a playful and diminutive figure, set within a floral ornamental scheme with allegories of different poetic genres, including, of course, an allegory of satire.¹⁹⁶ Just like the playful, yet subversive rituals of the *ordre de la Mouche à miel*, the duchess's *cabinet* at Sceaux took a symbol of the Sun King's godlike status and undermined its power through the subversive language of parody.

In 2019, French historian and musicologist Catherine Cessac and French art historian Dominique Brême published a short book in which they announced that the original painted wall panels of the duchesse du Maine's *cabinet des arts et des sciences*, long thought to have been destroyed during the demolition of the château de Sceaux between 1802 and 1803, had been discovered in the home of a French private collector.¹⁹⁷ This series of painted panels by Claude III Audran, the photographic reproduction of which has—thus far—been licensed exclusively to Cessac and Brême, depicts the duchesse du Maine and the members of her counter-court engaging in artistic and musical pursuits.¹⁹⁸ In one of these painted scenes, the duchesse du Maine sits atop a haystack resembling a large beehive, as members of her court gather below her. Wearing the gold medal of the Order of the Honey Fly around her neck, the duchesse du Maine appears in this scene as the master of her chivalric order. While the hive-like mound upon which the duchess is seated may allude to Mount Hymettus, the Greek mountain referenced in the oath pronounced by initiates into the duchess's chivalric order, the subversive Apollonian

¹⁹⁶ Brême and Cessac, 69-70.

¹⁹⁷ See Brême and Cessac.

¹⁹⁸ For photographs of the rediscovered painted panels from the duchesse du Maine's *cabinet des arts et des sciences*, see Brême and Cessac, 89-133.

iconography of the *cabinet des arts et des sciences* points to a secondary interpretation situating the duchesse du Maine atop Mount Helicon or Mount Parnassus. This iconographical reading is further reinforced by a contemporary poem composed by an anonymous member of the duchesse du Maine's chivalric order. Entitled "Dessein de L'apartement de son Altesse Serenissime Madame la Duchesse du Maine à Seaux" (Plan of the apartment of her Serene Highness Madame the Duchesse du Maine at Seaux [sic]), the poem describes the decorative and iconographical features of the duchess's apartment at Sceaux while simultaneously inventing an epic mythology around the figure of Ludovise—the divine persona of Louise-Bénédicté, duchesse du Maine.¹⁹⁹ In a section of the poem devoted to the duchess's *cabinet des arts et des sciences*, the anonymous poet exclaims:

It is you o great God of Permessus
 Who you offer to my eyes ;
 God protector of the Muses and the Arts,
 You that our august Princess
 In all her interested desires
 Come from a pure and divine fire
 Animate my Spirits and lead my hand.

Do not expect . . . that your art alone is enough
 To form noble ideas,
 You must elevate yourself as high as Ludovise
 Appears above humanity;
 The pure blood of the Gods who animate
 Within her so strongly imprinted
 Both the virtues of her ancestors
 And their sublime character.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ "Dessein de L'apartement de son Altesse Serenissime Madame la Duchesse du Maine à Seaux," MS 550, Bibliothèque du musée Condé, Chantilly, France. For a transcription of the poem, see Brême and Cessac, 44-56.

²⁰⁰ "C'est vous o grand dieu du Permesse / Qui vous offrez a mes regards; / Dieu protecteur des Muses et des Arts, / Vous que notre auguste Princesse / En tous ses desirs

The great god of the Permessus, a river flowing near Mount Helicon, is none other than Apollo, the god of the arts—and the sun—whose brilliance, the poet writes, has been outshined by “our august Princess . . . Ludovise.” As Audran’s diminutive figure of Apollo looked down from the ceiling of the *cabinet* upon the artistic achievements fostered by the duchess at her counter-court, the duchesse du Maine took her seat atop Mount Helicon as the new queen of the Muses—replacing Apollo, and Louis XIV by extension, as the protector of the arts and sciences. While Audran’s decorative scheme for the *cabinet des arts et des sciences* would only have been visible to those within the duchess’s inner circle, the duchesse du Maine was about to put her subversive cultural strategy of monarchical opposition on display in a much more public venue.

interesse / Venez d'un feu pur et divin / Animer mes esprits et conduire ma main. /
 N'espere pas . . . que ton art seul suffise / Pour former de nobles desseins, / Il faudrait
 t'elever autant que Ludovise / Parait au dessus des humains; / Le pur sang des Dieux qui
 l'anime / En elle fortement imprime / Et les vertus de ses ayeux / Et leur caractere
 sublime.” Quoted in Brême and Cessac, 44-35.



Figure 46. *Château de Sceaux* (as it appears today), Sceaux, France. Designed by Augustin Théophile Quantinet. 1856-1862. Photograph by Myrabella. CC-BY-SA-3.0,2.5,2.0,1.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chateau_Sceaux.jpg

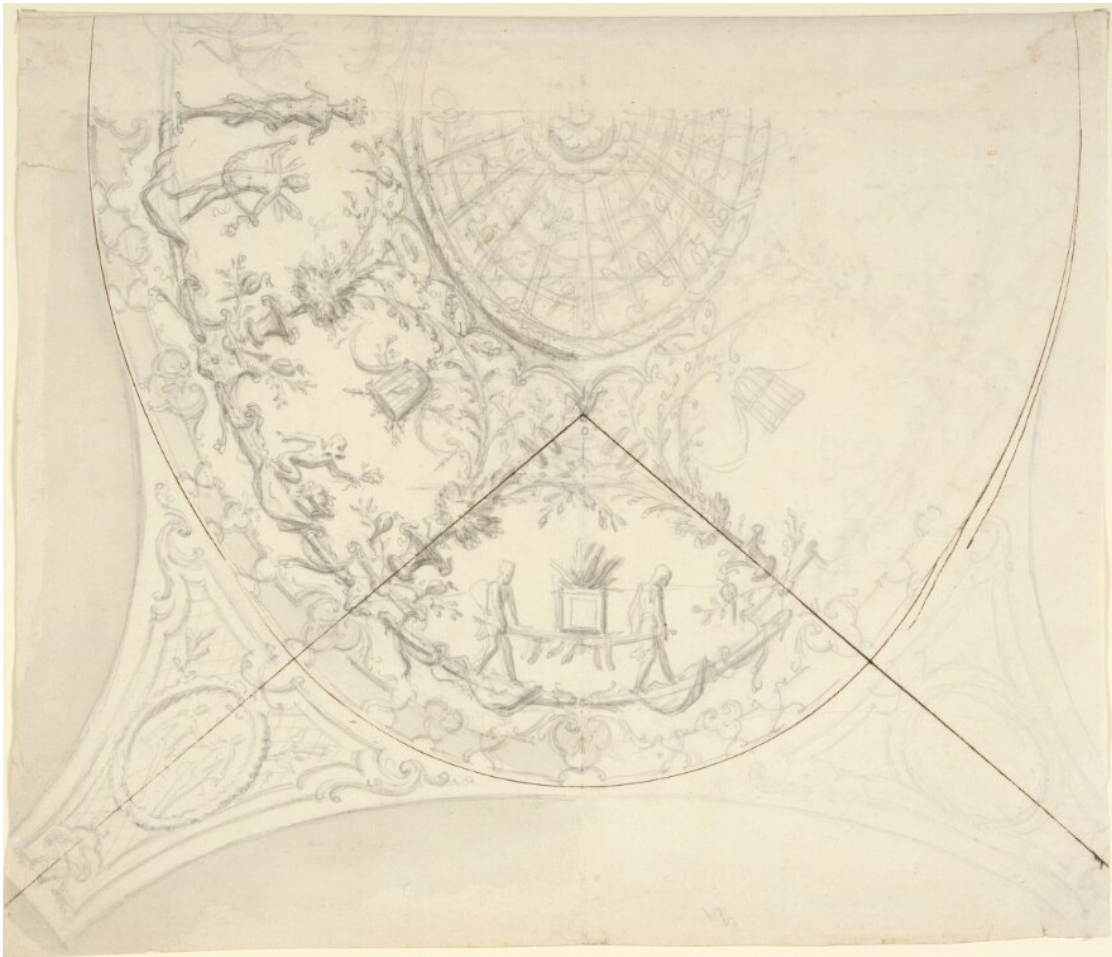


Figure 47. Design for part of the ceiling decoration in the gallery of duchesse du Maine's apartment at the *château de Sceaux*. Claude III Audran. ca. 1704. Pen and brown wash on paper. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm. Public Domain. Photograph: Cecilia Heisser / Nationalmuseum.

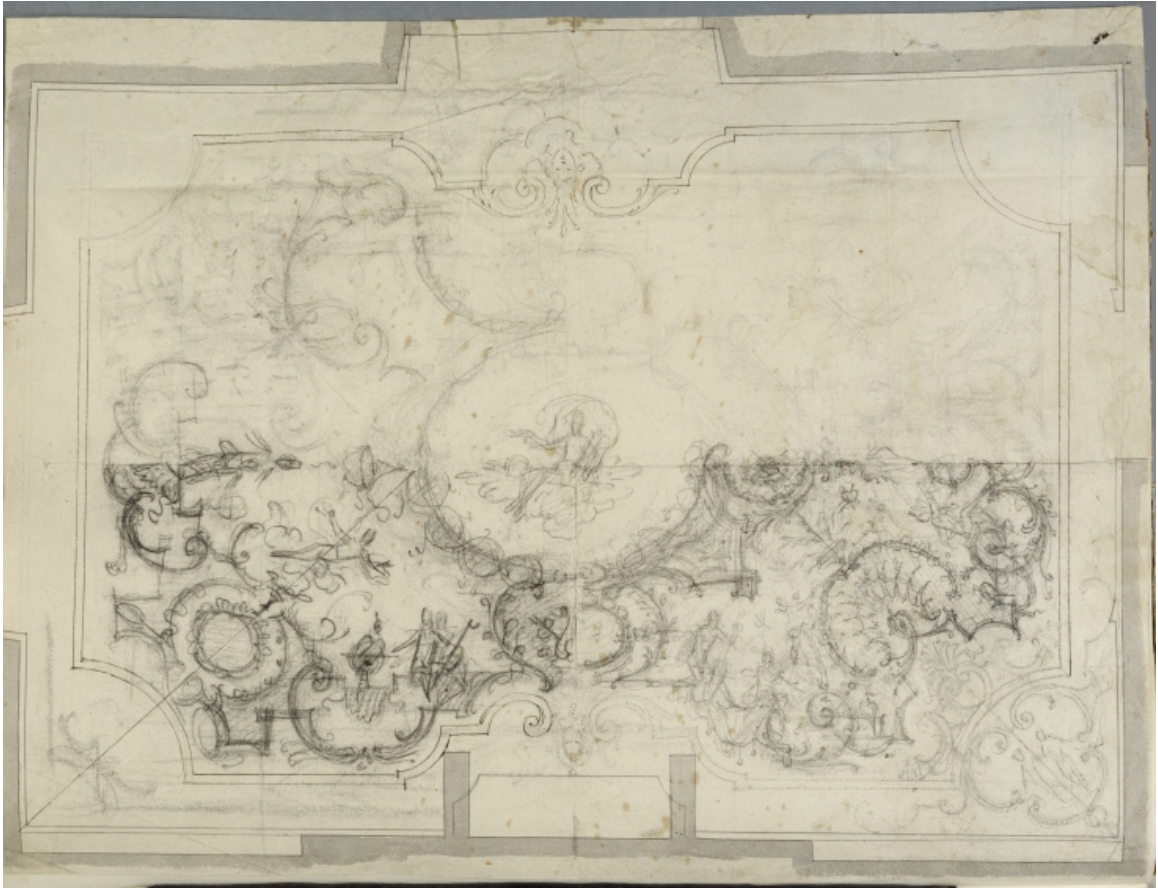


Figure 48. *Design for the ceiling decoration in the duchesse du Maine's cabinet des arts et des sciences at the château de Sceaux, with the figure of Apollo.* Claude III Audran. ca. 1704. Pen and gray wash on paper. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm. Public Domain. Photograph: Cecilia Heisser / Nationalmuseum.



Figure 49. *Bassin d'Apollon* (the Apollo Fountain). Jean-Baptiste Tuby, after a design by Charles Le Brun. 1668-1672. Gilded lead. Gardens of the château de Versailles, Versailles, France. Photograph by Gaudry Daniel. CC-BY-SA-3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Versailles_bassin_d%27apollon.JPG

CHAPTER V

The Queen of Sceaux versus the King of France at the *Salon* of 1704

From September 12 until November 8, 1704, the Grand Galérie of the Louvre was opened to the French public, who came to the Parisian palace to see the *Salon de 1704*, the last public art exhibition of the reign of Louis XIV. On display in the gallery were 520 works of art selected by the members of the *académie royale de peinture et de sculpture*, including History paintings, genre and hunting scenes, bronze sculptures, and various portraits.²⁰¹ Organized to celebrate the birth of Louis XIV's great-grandson, the duc de Bretagne, the Salon of 1704 was as much an artistic event as it was a glorification of royal authority. Founded in 1648, the Salon's organizing body, the *académie royale de peinture et de sculpture*, was an integral part of the cultural system established under Louis XIV, the chief objective of which was to codify and propagate a visual language for representing the absolute power and majesty of the Sun King. As an extension of the king's cultural system, the Salon not only allowed members of the *académie* to showcase the cultural supremacy of the French monarchy, but also provided a public venue in which to put the king's sacred image on display. Just as the previous Salon, held in 1699 (fig. 50), had featured Antoine Coysevox's gilded bronze portrait bust of the king (fig. 51), the Salon of 1704 marked the public debut of Hyacinthe Rigaud's *Portrait de Louis*

²⁰¹ Conseil général des Hauts-de-Seine, *Dossier de presse: 1704-Le salon, les arts et le roi et Dessiner à l'Académie royale, Chefs-d'oeuvre de la collection Christian et Isabelle Adrien, Du 22 mars au 30 juin 2013* (Nanterre: Conseil général des Hauts-de-Seine, 2013), 4; Michael Levey, *Painting and Sculpture in France, 1700-1789* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 4.

XIV en costume de Sacre (Portrait of Louis XIV in Coronation Robes), arguably the most famous extant representation of the French monarch (fig. 52).²⁰² In Rigaud's portrait, Louis XIV poses majestically beside his throne in his blue velvet coronation robes, embroidered with gold fleurs-de-lys and lined with ermine, which cascade in a torrent of heavy drapery folds. Like the throne depicted in the painting, the portrait of Louis XIV was exhibited at the Salon atop a dais and draped in velvet, presenting the king's image, not as a work of art, but as a proxy for the king himself. Thus, while Louis XIV's physical body resided at the château de Versailles, the king's immortal political body was omnipresent, incarnated in paint, stone, and other visual media that allowed the king to display his absolute sovereignty in public venues like the Salon of 1704. Semiotically speaking, in Rigaud's portrait, the signifier *is* the signified—or, as the Port Royal logicians proclaimed, "*Le portrait de César, c'est César.*"²⁰³ Yet, by using the Salon to display the political power of the king before a public audience, Louis XIV and his ministers inadvertently created a public venue in which the cultural hegemony of French monarchy could be directly contested. For at the Salon of 1704, it would not be Rigaud's portrait of Louis XIV, but another portrait, cleverly disguised as a history painting that would draw the attention of the Salon-going public. Entitled the *Festin de Didon et Énée* (Feast of Dido and Aeneas), the subject of the painting (fig. 53) was not an episode from Virgil's *Aeneid*, but rather a banquet hosted by the king's daughter-in-law, Louise-Bénédicte de Bourbon, duchesse du Maine. Like the duchesse de Montpensier before her,

²⁰² Levey, 4.

²⁰³ Quoted in Louis Marin, *Portrait of the King*, trans. Martha M. Houle (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan Press, 1988), 15.

whose own allegorical portrait as an Amazon by Pierre Bourguignon was submitted to the *académie royale de peinture et de sculpture* in 1672, the duchesse du Maine would pursue a strategy of monarchical opposition through the pictorial language of the *portrait historié*. Rather than attacking the monarchy on the battlefield like the *frondeuses* of the 1650s, the duchesse du Maine would challenge the political authority of the king within the representational spheres of royal absolutism.

Although the circumstances of the commission are not entirely known, *The Feast of Dido and Aeneas* is believed to have been executed by François de Troy in the spring of 1704, while the artist was serving as court painter to the duc and duchesse du Maine at the château de Sceaux.²⁰⁴ Painted in oils on a canvas measuring 160 centimeters by 230 centimeters, *The Feast of Dido and Aeneas* depicts a scene from the first book of Virgil's *Aeneid*, in which Cupid, disguised as Aeneas' son Ascanius, is presented by Aeneas to Queen Dido of Carthage, who has received the Trojan hero and his entourage into her palace.²⁰⁵ By disguising Cupid, the god of love, as Ascanius, Aeneas's mother, the goddess Venus, enabled the young love god to induce Dido to fall in love with the Trojan hero, thereby securing the support of Carthage, a city under the patronage of the Trojans' enemy, the vengeful goddess Juno.²⁰⁶ De Troy's *Feast of Dido and Aeneas* provides a window into a magnificent dining hall, where one sees a grand banquet in full swing. The

²⁰⁴ Dominique Brême, "Le Festin de Didon et Enée, de nouveaux invités à la cour de Sceaux," in *Une journée à la cour de la Duchesse du Maine: Exposition du 24 septembre 2003 au 12 janvier 2004, Musée de l'Ile-de-France-Domaine de Sceaux*, ed. Cécile Dupont-Logié (Sceaux: Musée de l'Ile-de-France, 2003), 12.

²⁰⁵ Dominique Brême, *François de Troy, 1645–1730* (Toulouse: Musée Paul-Dupuy; Paris: Somogy éditions d'art, 1997), 60-2; Virgil *The Aeneid* 1.895-985.

²⁰⁶ Virgil *The Aeneid* 1.895-985.

lavishly furnished hall plays host to over fifty attendants, all of whom dressed in brilliantly colored antique costumes, and each rendered with distinct physiognomic features. De Troy's masterful use of color is the first formal characteristic that calls our attention on examining the picture. Immediately, the viewers eyes are drawn to the painting's abundance of gold, from the golden cuirass donned by Aeneas, together with its visual counterpart, Dido's golden mantle, to the golden dinner service set out on the dining table and the vast assortment of golden treasures offered as gifts to Queen Dido, who is crowned with a golden tiara. The warm richness of the gold tones was achieved by coating the canvas with a first layer of red ochre, on top of which he would transfer his drawings by hand, and subsequently apply his oil-based colors and glazes.²⁰⁷ This technique of layering was associated with the Venetian colorists, notably Titian, who employed the technique as a means of enhancing the tonal warmth of his paintings.²⁰⁸

François de Troy sets up a striking tonal contrast in the picture by equipping the central figure in his composition, the hero Aeneas, with a cool ultramarine blue mantle. The treatment of the mantle's drapery is one of the painting's most illustrative, and spectacular, examples of the artist's painterly manner and mastery of the Venetian tradition of *colorito*. *Colorito*, or *coloris*, was the defining formal characteristic of the artistic mode of the *rubénistes*, one of the two opposing sides that participated in the *querelle du coloris*, a revival of the artistic debate between *disegno* (*dessin*) and *colorito* (*coloris*) that had taken place in Italy during the sixteenth century. A pillar of the

²⁰⁷ Brême, *François de Troy*, 95.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

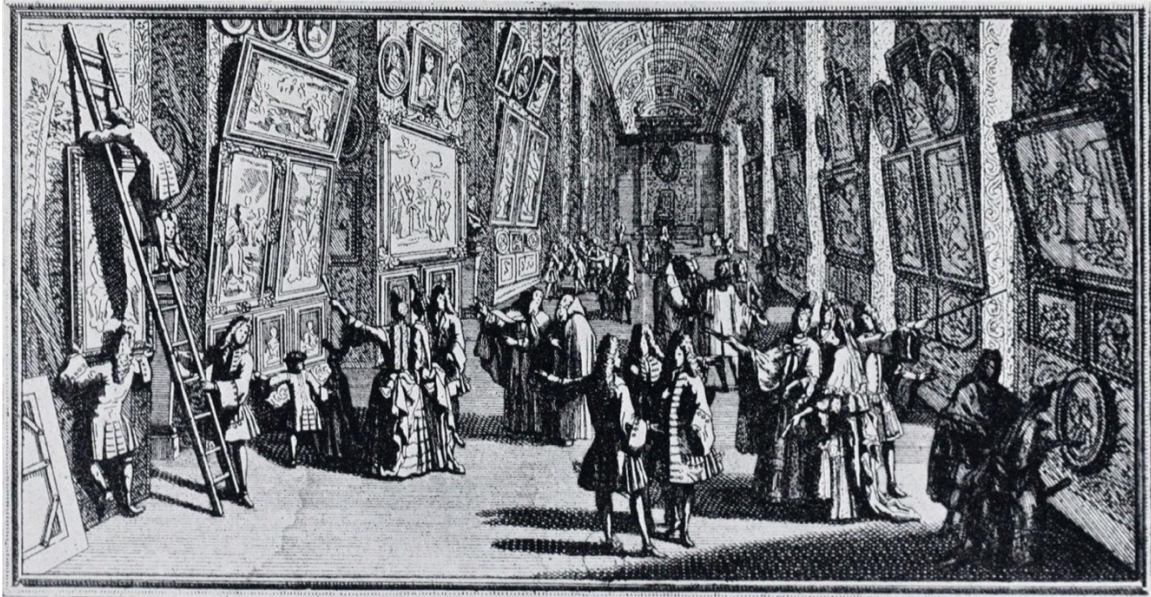


Figure 50. *Exhibition of paintings and sculptures in the gallery of the Louvre for the Salon of 1699*, illustration from the *Almanach royal de l'année 1700*. Nicolas Langlois. 1700. Engraving. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 51. *Bust of Louis XIV.* Antoine Coysevox. ca. 1699. Bronze, originally gilded. The Wallace Collection, Hertford House, London. © The Wallace Collection. CC-BY-NC-ND-4.0.

<https://wallacelive.wallacecollection.org:443/eMP/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&module=collection&objectId=65851&viewType=detailView>

Exhibited at the Salon of 1699.



Figure 52. *Portrait de Louis XIV en costume de sacre* (Portrait of Louis XIV in Coronation Robes). Hyacinthe Rigaud. 1700-1701. Oil on canvas. Musée du Louvre, Paris. Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 53. *The Feast of Dido and Aeneas* (allegorical portrait of the duchesse du Maine and her court at Sceaux). François de Troy. 1704. Oil on canvas. Musée du Domaine départemental de Sceaux, Sceaux, France. Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Romano-Florentine artistic tradition, *disegno*, characterized by its emphasis on hard contour lines, draftsmanship, and classical notions of order, proportion, and the ideal human form, became the great polemical opponent of *colorito*, associated with the North Italian, and, particularly, Venetian schools of the sixteenth-century, and characterized by warm and luminous colors, fluid brushstrokes, a highly expressive naturalism, and painterly techniques such as layering and glazing. The *querelle du coloris* was sparked at the *académie royale de peinture et de sculpture* in 1672, the same year that the academicians received Montpensier's subversive Amazonian portrait, when Philippe de Champaigne argued for the superiority of Nicolas Poussin, the seventeenth-century champion of rational order and *dessin*, over Titian, the father of *coloris*, inciting a divide amongst artists and critics: on one side were the *poussinistes*, who endorsed the mode of *dessin* and the classical linearity of Poussin's artistic manner, and, on the other side, the *rubénistes*, who, like De Troy, endorsed the pictorial mode of *coloris* and the painterliness of such artists as Peter Paul Rubens and Titian.²⁰⁹

For the first decades of the *querelle du coloris*, *rubéniste* principles were rarely explored outside of theoretical debates. When, in 1661, Louis XIV took over the reins of government, the king and his ministers integrated the *académie royale de peinture et de sculpture* into an expansive system of official culture, an ideological state apparatus composed of numerous royal academies, controlling various cultural and intellectual domains, from science and dance to architecture and language, and whose primary

²⁰⁹ John Macarthur, *The Picturesque: Architecture, Disgust and Other Irregularities* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2007), 22.

objective was to glorify the king and to ensure the cultural hegemony of the monarchy.²¹⁰ Such a system guaranteed the art academies' monopolies on art education, training, and official commissions, and allowed for the creation of an official artistic manner that reflected the values of the monarchy.²¹¹ The king, who identified himself with Alexander the Great and other heroic rulers from classical antiquity, wanted the arts of his kingdom to embody classical ideals, which could serve to glorify him and his reign of order and reason.²¹² With its emphasis on order, the artistic manner advocated by the *poussinistes* was adopted as the *de facto* official style of the monarchy, which made the visual expression of *rubéniste* principles a challenge to monarchical cultural hegemony. Towards the end of the seventeenth-century, however, a *rubéniste* revolution slowly came under way, brought about by a small number of artists among whom was François de Troy, who, in his *Feast of Dido and Aeneas*, broke from the *poussiniste* circle of Charles Le Brun, and brought *rubéniste* coloring back to its Venetian roots.²¹³ For the Salon-goers of 1704, the dynamic fluidity of De Troy's brushstrokes, easily discernible in the picture's painterly execution and luminous coloring, would have proved a striking contrast to the Salon piece of De Troy's contemporary, Hyacinthe Rigaud.

Together with Nicolas de Largillière, François de Troy and Hyacinthe Rigaud were among the most highly sought-after portraitists of the last decades of the reign of

²¹⁰ Burke, 49-59; See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127-86.

²¹¹ Thomas E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 28.

²¹² Burke, 35-7.

²¹³ Brême, *François de Troy*, 97.

Louis XIV. As Largillière's clientele was composed mostly of wealthy bourgeois, Rigaud, whose sitters came from the upper aristocracy, as well as the royal family, was De Troy's main professional rival.²¹⁴ Upon receiving the commission for his 1701 *Portrait de Louis XIV en costume de sacre*, Rigaud, who was an admirer of Flemish portraiture and certainly no ardent *poussiniste*, nevertheless set about painting a portrait in accordance with reigning formal and iconographic conventions as prescribed by the monarchical cultural system.²¹⁵ These conventions, which corresponded to a set of monarchical values promulgated by all state-sponsored cultural institutions, can best be understood by examining the many rules and principles that governed the most important art form under the reign of Louis XIV, classical drama, and, in particular, tragedy. Among these rules and principles of classical drama, the most important were the supremacy of reason and order over emotion and passion, the superiority of the ancients over the moderns, and the rules of decorum (*bienséance*) and verisimilitude (*vraisemblance*).²¹⁶ In Rigaud's royal portrait, the "sensory pleasure and emotional affectations" that the *poussinistes* disparagingly associated with the painterly brushwork of the *rubéniste* manner, such as that employed by De Troy, are brought under the governance of reason and order, expressed by the portrait's rational principles of composition and form.²¹⁷ Whereas the dynamic drapery of Aeneas' mantle is rendered

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

²¹⁵ Anthony Blunt, *Art and Architecture in France, 1500-1700*, 2nd ed. (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1970), 243.

²¹⁶ For more on the rules of French classical tragedy, see John D. Lyons, *Kingdom of Disorder: The Theory of Tragedy in Classical France* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1999).

²¹⁷ Macarthur, 22.

with De Troy's fluid, painterly brushstrokes, the folds of the Sun King's robes in Rigaud's portrait are, as Anthony Blunt explains, "modelled with a linear sharpness . . . nearer to Champaigne than to van Dyck."²¹⁸ The linearity of his portrait embraces the classical model of the ancients, represented by the *poussinistes*, over that of the moderns, represented by the *rubénistes*.

The classical principles of the supremacy of order, reason, and the ancients are also expressed in the iconography of Rigaud's portrait of Louis XIV, notably in its classical architectural elements, like the antique column erected in the background, and the plinth upon which it rests which bears a sculpted relief of an allegorical figure of Justice, asserting the king's authority to maintain order by imposing his laws. The sumptuous blue and gold of the king's coronation robes, with their pristine white ermine lining, are rendered with such disciplined technical skill that the viewer fails to detect the presence of brush strokes, as if the hand of the artist were never present. The apparent absence of the artist from his creation and the suppression of any traces of physical labor reveal a strict adherence to the classical rule of verisimilitude, or *vraisemblance*, by which the work simulates reality. By removing himself for his work, Rigaud draws attention away from the portrait's physical properties as an object and its status as an artwork, and presents, as Louis Marin has argued, the king's sacramental body, that is "the exchange between . . . the historical [physical] and political bodies."²¹⁹ While the king's physical body is mortal, it serves as the vessel in which the political body is held.

²¹⁸ Blunt, 243.

²¹⁹ Marin, 14.

Upon the death of the king, the political body, which is immortal, immediately inhabits the physical body of his dynastic successor. In this age of absolutism, the royal portrait could thus function, like the physical body of the king, as a vessel for the political body, thereby becoming the body of the monarch.²²⁰

The most important rule, not only of French classicism, but of French society as a whole under the reign Louis XIV, was that of decorum, or *bienséance*—the concept of what is, and what is not, socially, culturally, or politically suitable within a given context. In his *Mémoires*, Louis de Rouvroy, duc de Saint-Simon, expressed disdain for Jean-Antoine de Mesmes, comte d'Avaux, président of the *Parlement de Paris* from 1712 and a regular participant in the duchesse du Maine's *divertissements* at the château Sceaux, for allowing himself to be painted by De Troy in *The Feast of Dido and Aeneas*, partaking in the festivities alongside the other attendants, among whom, to Saint-Simon's abhorrence, were servants:

[Mesmes] devoted himself, to the point of indecency, to all the fantasies of the madame du Maine, and brought in his brother the chevalier. They went to all the festivities at Sceaux, . . . This knight had no shame in performing in her plays, nor did the president in strolling around; he . . . allowed himself to be painted in a disguise in a history painting alongside the valets of Sceaux. This ridiculous act made the rounds and greatly displeased the Parlement.²²¹

In a serious breach of *bienséance*, the servants are not differentiated iconographically or

²²⁰ Sheriff, 147-8.

²²¹ “Celui-ci [Mesmes] . . . se devouant , jusqu’à l’indécence, à toutes les fantaisies de madame du Maine, y introduisit son frère le chevalier. Ils furent de toutes les fêtes de Sceaux. . . . Ce chevalier n’eut pas honte de jouer aux comédies, ni le président de faire le baladin: il . . . se laisser peindre travesti dans un tableau historique de ces gentillesses, avec des valets de Sceaux . . . Ce ridicule lui en donna dans le monde et déplut fort au parlement.” Saint-Simon, 9:170.

formally from the comte d’Avaux and other members of the nobility, all of whom dressed, like their servants, in antique costume. In representing all of the figures, regardless of social status, in antique costume, De Troy placed his group portrait within the context of a History painting, the noblest subject for a painter according to the *académie royale*’s hierarchy of genres, thereby equating this group of patricians and plebeians with the great heroes of antiquity.

Why would the duchesse du Maine, a *princesse du sang* whose ambitious program of cultural patronage reflected her strong sense of aristocratic pride, wish for De Troy to include servants among the privileged elite of her ducal court? In spite of being a most serious violation of the social rules of *bienséance*, persons of common birth, including domestics would play a visible role in the court festivities of the duchesse du Maine. Saint-Simon, in characteristic fashion, complains in his *Mémoires* that the court at the château de Sceaux, which he unfavorably dubs “the theater of the folies of the duchesse du Maine,” would frequently play host to *comédies* in which the duchess herself performed alongside her domestics.²²² “Mme du Maine,” wrote Saint-Simon, “had been staging more and more performances with her servants and some old actors. The entire court goes to see it; we do not understand the folly of dressing as an actress . . . and putting oneself on stage in a public spectacle.”²²³ In emphasizing the public nature of these performances, Saint-Simon was likely comparing the duchess’s *comédies* to the

²²² “. . . le théâtre des folies de la duchesse du Maine.” Saint-Simon, 10:358.

²²³ “Mme du Maine . . . se mit de plus en plus à jouer des comédies avec ses domestiques et quelques anciens comédiens. Toute la cour y allait; on ne comprenait pas la folie de la fatigue de s’habiller en comédienne, . . . et de se donner en spectacle public sur un théâtre.” Saint-Simon, 5:134.

popular forms of theatrical entertainment performed in the major venues of the emerging Parisian public sphere, including the Opéra-Ballet, the Comédie-Française and the fairground theaters.²²⁴ In the early eighteenth-century, these public venues often showed performances that challenged the cultural hegemony of the monarchy by parodying the classical tragedies and court ballets of Louis XIV's reign, which had sought to glorify to king by equating him with the heroes and gods of classical antiquity.²²⁵ In one such spectacle, André Campra's opéra-ballet *Les Muses* (fig. 54), a parody of Jean-Baptiste Lully's court ballet the *Ballet des Muses* of 1666, the Muses, who, in Lully's court ballet, had left Parnassus to join the court of Louis XIV, are no longer with the Sun King and his court, but have joined Cupid, god of love and desire. In the prologue, the Muses begin to sing about the heroic themes of classical tragedy when they are cut short by Bacchus, god of passion, pleasure, and the antithesis of classical reason, whose praises are then sung by the Muses.²²⁶ The four acts that follow are each dedicated to a different theatrical genre—pastoral, satire, tragedy and comedy—and, by the end of the piece, it is evident that tragedy has been vanquished by the other genres.²²⁷ By appropriating classical figures from a court ballet, which had asserted Louis XIV's dominion over the arts by likening the king to the god Apollo, Campra's *Les Muses*, performed just one year before the Salon of 1704, challenged the cultural hegemony of the monarchy, replacing the Sun

²²⁴ For more on theater in the Parisian public sphere, see Georgia J. Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure: Louis XIV and the Politics of Spectacle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

²²⁵ Cowart, 167-96.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 191-2.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 192-3.

King's reign of order and reason, with a reign of love and pleasure, championed by the public sphere.²²⁸ As Saint-Simon's critique of the painting reveals, De Troy's *Feast of Dido and Aeneas* was seen by the duchesse du Maine's contemporaries as a pictorial form of theatrical parody, which appropriated heroes from classical literature as a means of satirizing the heroic manner of History painting and its glorification of the French monarchy.

The heroic mytho-historical themes depicted in court tragedies and ballets, Salon exhibition pieces, royal residences, and formal portraiture, among other forms of visual and ritual culture, corresponded to a standardized language of monarchical representation through which the absolutist authority of the French sovereign could be continuously reinforced and performed within the representational public sphere. This language was most effectively conveyed through spectacle, a cultural manifestation of the king's absolutist regime in the sense that "its means are simultaneously its ends. It is the sun which never sets over the empire of modern passivity. It covers the entire surface of the world and bathes endlessly in its own glory."²²⁹ This passage from Marxist theorist Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, though written in 1967 in reference to twentieth-century capitalist society, is nonetheless useful as a theoretical framework for understanding the role of spectacle in Louis XIV's absolutist regime.²³⁰ In *The Society of Spectacle*, Debord explains: "The oldest social specialization, the specialization of power,

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Fredy Perlman and Jon Supak, rev. ed. (n.p.: Black & Red, 1977), sec. 13.

²³⁰ Ibid., sec. 41.

is at the root of the spectacle. The spectacle is thus a specialized activity which speaks for all the others. It is the diplomatic representation of hierarchic society to itself, where all other expression is banned.”²³¹ Under the reign of Louis XIV, spectacle was employed not only as a means of assigning social identity to the king’s subjects, but also as a means of promoting the normative gender roles of the regime. Through such classical tragedies as Jean Racine’s *Phèdre*, a 1677 adaptation of a Euripidean tragedy, women were persuaded that they lacked the senses of reason and order unique to the male sex, rendering them both morally and intellectually incapable of participating in political, economic, or military life. In *Phèdre*, the classical anti-heroine Phaedra becomes consumed with passion for her son-in-law Hippolytus, whose death she indirectly causes in an irrational state, leading her to commit suicide. As one of the most powerful cultural tools at the king’s disposal, the language of dominance imparted by the spectacle of tragedy to the subjugated classes, and aristocratic women in particular, was aimed at providing moral justification for the patriarchal system of the French monarchy, and at demonstrating the tragic consequences that awaited those who refused to conform to the king’s absolutist regime and its administration of reason, order, and obedience.²³² Unwilling to be limited by the normative gender roles of a patriarchal society, the duchesse du Maine refused to conform to the submissive, domestic image of femininity that the king had promoted through the monarchy’s patriarchal cultural system,

²³¹ Ibid., sec. 23.

²³² Mitchell Greenberg, *Subjectivity and Subjugation in Seventeenth-Century Drama and Prose: The Family Romance of French Classicism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 142-43.

particularly in the form of court ballets like Lully's *Ballet des amours déguisés* (1664), in which the passions of the female characters, Cleopatra and Armida, are overcome by the glory of their respective male counterparts, Marc Anthony and Rinaldo, symbolizing Louis XIV's patriarchal power to tame feminine nature.²³³ Through her own counter-hegemonic program, the duchess created an anti-patriarchal counter-culture that subverted the monarchy's cultural system by co-opting both the allegorical language and the institutional venue—the Salon—through which Louis XIV had asserted his absolutist authority within the representational public sphere.

Prior to François de Troy's *portrait historié* of the duchesse du Maine as Dido, visual representations of the Carthaginian queen in French art had consisted almost exclusively of paintings depicting the moment of her suicide. As Virgil recounts in Book IV of the *Aeneid*, Queen Dido of Carthage, having fallen passionately in love with Aeneas, commits suicide after the Trojan hero departs from Carthage to continue on his voyage.²³⁴ Treated in two paintings by Sébastien Bourdon (fig. 55), a follower of Poussin, and in one painting by Simon Vouet (fig. 56), the subject of Dido's suicide, like the suicide of Phaedra, identified women with the forces of passion, irrationality, and disorder, asserting the need for them to be governed by the reason and patriarchal authority of the monarch. By subverting the heroic genres of classical tragedy and history

²³³ Cowart, 81-3; For more on Louis XIV's use of the arts as a means of asserting his ability to tame feminine nature, and the duchesse du Maine's artistic resistance to the king's absolute power, see Meredith Martin, *Dairy Queens: The Politics of Pastoral Architecture from Catherine de' Medici to Marie-Antoinette* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 68-113.

²³⁴ Virgil *The Aeneid* 4.622-978.

painting, the duchess was able to challenge the normative gender constraints promoted by the French monarchy. Rather than showing the tragic suicide of Dido, De Troy represents the duchesse du Maine as the powerful Queen of Carthage, dressed in the royal white of the Bourbon monarchy and donning a crown. Yet, as with the *portraits historiés* of the duchesse de Montpensier as an Amazon, the physical and physiognomic traits of De Troy's Dido made the figure's true identity—the duchesse du Maine—unmistakable to those attending the Salon.²³⁵ Evoking the popular *divertissements* hosted by the duchess at her château de Sceaux, the painting shows the duchesse du Maine performing the role of the Carthaginian queen alongside her supporting cast of courtiers and servants.

Whereas previous depictions of Dido, like those of most other tragic heroines in the French visual and performing arts of the seventeenth century, had represented passion and pleasure as the cause of the female character's demise, De Troy's *Feast of Dido and Aeneas* shows passion and pleasure to be the source of Dido's power. Reclined on her daybed, her left breast exposed, the duchesse du Maine presides over a kingdom of pleasure. Rather than affecting Dido with violent passion, the figure of Cupid disguised as Ascanius—a portrait of her son, the prince de Dombes—is offered to the duchess, bringing the realm of love under her dominion.²³⁶ The brilliantly-colored antique costumes and exaggerated heroic gestures of the characters, rendered by De Troy in the painterly manner of the *rubénistes* with little to no regard for archaeological accuracy, emphasize the satirical nature of the picture. Assuming the role of the Trojan hero,

²³⁵ Adolphe Jullien, *Les Grandes Nuits de Sceaux: Le Théâtre de la Duchesse du Maine, d'après des documents inédits* (Paris: J. Baur, 1876), 14.

²³⁶ Brême, "Le Festin de Didon et Enée," 10.

Aeneas, the duchess's husband, the duc du Maine, is dressed for battle in his antique cuirass and helmet yet performs no significant action in the composition. Subverting the patriarchal order asserted in Virgil's epic poem and by seventeenth-century French society alike, De Troy's allegorical painting shows the duchess du Maine as the sovereign and the duc du Maine as her subject.

The distinct physiognomies of the figures in *The Feast of Dido and Aeneas* emphasize that they are not ancient heroes, but modern performers in costume, inhabiting, not the ancient palace of the queen of Carthage, but the imaginary set of a painted stage. This painted stage features many of the same architectural and decorative elements found in Rigaud's royal portrait, including a single, free-standing colossal column with a dark-colored shaft and golden base, erected on a raised plinth and partially obscured by a canopy of drapery. This canopy of drapery, suspended above Dido and her guests, and the figure of the Sun King in De Troy and Rigaud's respective works, is an iconographic reference to the sacred canopy, or baldachin, installed in Christian churches since antiquity to indicate and symbolically protect the site of the altar. Because of the sacred nature of the monarchy in France, a baldachin was placed over the throne of the French king, at least during coronation ceremonies, and was additionally situated above the bed of the king. These symbolic assertions of the sacredness of the French monarchy were particularly significant under Louis XIV, when the king's absolute authority was justified by the doctrine of divine right. De Troy's *Feast of Dido and Aeneas* appropriates this symbol of the interconnectedness of Church and State, understood by contemporaries as a sacred object, and subverts it by representing the exactingly rendered velvet fabric of

Rigaud's canopy with expressive brushwork, leaving behind a trace of highly visible brushstrokes. Under De Troy's brush, Rigaud's material symbol of the divine right of kings is reduced to a makeshift stage prop. Whereas Rigaud hides any physical traces of his authorship to dissimulate the materiality of his representation of the king's sacramental body, De Troy, on the other hand, inserts himself into his painting, both through the visibility of his brushstrokes and by going so far as to include his own self-portrait among the duchess's courtiers. By emphasizing the performative artifice of the allegorical genre, as well as the materiality of the painted surface, De Troy and his patron, the duchesse du Maine, invited viewers at the Salon of 1704 to look behind the curtain and see the works on display—including the *Portrait of Louis XIV*—as carefully choreographed spectacles of pigment and oil.

By the early eighteenth century, with dramatic works like *Les Muses*, the Parisian public sphere had successfully challenged the monarchy's cultural hegemony in the realm of the performing arts.²³⁷ With the decline of Louis XIV's popularity and sociocultural influence in the 1690s and 1700s, the public theater venue had triumphed over the royal court, and aristocrats, not wanting to miss out on the newest social and cultural attractions, began participating in these popular forms of entertainment in which the very social conventions that separated them from their new *bourgeois* cohorts were ridiculed.²³⁸ Unlike these public theater venues, the Salon of 1704 was a cultural venue still very much under royal control, organized, as it was, by the *académie royale*.

²³⁷ For an analysis of André Campra's *Les Muses* (1703), see Cowart, 191-6.

²³⁸ Crow, 52-5.

Rigaud's portrait of Louis XIV was given pride of place at the *Salon*, hung at one end of the Grande Galerie beneath a sumptuous canopy of green velvet.²³⁹ Yet, just sixteen years later, five years after the death of Louis XIV in 1715, the French painter Antoine Watteau would show Rigaud's majestic royal portrait cut down to bust-length format and stowed away in a wooden crate, as if to be exiled to the obscurity of storage space. Painted in 1721 as a decorative shop sign for an art boutique, owned by Watteau's friend, the art dealer Edme Gersaint, Watteau's painting, *L'Enseigne de Gersaint* (fig. 57) signals the triumph of the Parisian public sphere over the monologic representational sphere of absolutist visual culture.²⁴⁰

In Watteau's painting, the disposal of Rigaud's *Portrait of Louis XIV in Coronation Robes* takes place off to the side of Gersaint's boutique, where the painting is ignored by almost all of the visitors, except for a single noblewoman who glances at the picture as it is packed away, just before stepping into the boutique to examine the other works on display. Besides a few Dutch and Flemish portraits and a handful of still-lives and religious scenes, the vast majority of these works on display are of mythological subjects, painted by Venetian, Flemish, and French artists; in other words, Watteau has painted a gallery of *rubénistes*, employing the colorism and painterliness championed by their school.²⁴¹ In this public venue, operated, like the Parisian theaters, not by monarchy,

²³⁹ Joshua James Foster, ed., *French Art from Watteau to Prud'hon, together with an introduction and some studies in the social history of the period by various authors* (London: Dickinsons, 1906), 2:100.

²⁴⁰ Mary Vidal, *Watteau's Painted Conversations: Art, Literature, and Talk in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 176-7.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 177.

but by commerce, the social elite of Régence-era Paris has gathered to participate in the burgeoning public art market, where the reigning artistic styles are determined, not by royal policy, but by public taste. While the visitor on the left side of the composition, helping the women in the pastel pink dress into the boutique, can be identified as an aristocrat by the sword at his side, the social identities of those who figure among the rest of this social elite remain unknown, revealing how this new culture of pleasure and refined leisure has blurred the social distinctions among those who frequent the emerging public art venues and boutiques.²⁴² It was this new elite culture, set in Paris and no longer at Versailles, that the duchesse du Maine helped to develop through the counter-hegemonic program that she cultivated at her court at Sceaux, and introduced into the Parisian public sphere through the satirical spectacle, performed in oils on canvas, that she staged at the Salon of 1704 by exhibiting François de Troy's singular masterpiece, *The Feast of Dido and Aeneas*. De Troy's fluid, painterly manner, rooted in the mode of the *rubénistes*, would be adopted and intensified by his successors, including his son, Jean-François de Troy, and Antoine Watteau, whose *fête galante* genre of painting and satirical treatments of Louis XIV's regime owed a great debt to De Troy's *fête historiée*. If Watteau's *L'Enseigne de Gersaint* can be read as the pictorial entombment of the Sun King's cultural hegemony, as Jay Caplan, Mary Vidal, and other scholars have proposed, it was De Troy's *Feast of Dido and Aeneas* and its pictorial performance of the duchesse du Maine's "théâtre des folies" that helped stage its downfall.²⁴³

²⁴² Ibid., 194-5.

²⁴³ Ibid., 178; Jay Caplan, *In the King's Wake: Post-Absolutist Culture in France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 78; Thomas E. Kaiser, "The Monarchy,



Figure 54. Scene from André Campra's opéra-ballet, *Les Muses*, premiered at the Paris Opéra on October 28, 1703. Franz Ertinger. 1706. Engraving. The New York Public Library, New York. Public Domain. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/2fad8190-82e5-0131-da2f-58d385a7bbd0>

Public Opinion, and the Subversions of Antoine Watteau," in *Antoine Watteau: Perspectives on the Artist and the Culture of His Time*, ed. Mary D. Sheriff (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2006), 63.



Figure 55. *The Death of Dido*. Sébastien Bourdon. 1637-1640. Oil on canvas. The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia. Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 56. *The Death of Dido*. Simon Vouet. ca. 1640. Oil on canvas. Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dole, Dole, France. Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons.



Figure 57. *L'Enseigne de Gersaint*. Antoine Watteau. 1720. Oil on canvas. Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin. Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

CONCLUSION

Did Women Reign?

The most explicit, and public, cultural assault on the royal image of the Sun King would take place ten years after the exhibition of De Troy's *Feast of Dido and Aeneas* at the château de Sceaux, when, in July 1714, the duchesse du Maine put on the first in a series of festivities that would continue until the Spring of 1715, concluding only a few months before Louis XIV's death on September 1. This sequence of *divertissements*, sixteen in all, was named the *Grandes Nuits de Sceaux* (the great nights of Sceaux), a reference, not only to the late hour at which they were staged, but also to their nocturnal theme.²⁴⁴ For the crowd of aristocrats and literary figures who flocked to the *Grandes Nuits*—the young Voltaire was a frequent guest—the highlight was each evening's unique performance.²⁴⁵ These performances consisted of short theatrical pieces called *intermèdes*, usually three or four of which were performed over the course of each *nuite*, and combined elements of different theatrical genres, including the *comédie-ballet*, tragedy, and the *pastorale*, along with instrumental music, dancing, and singing.²⁴⁶ As Catherine Cessac has observed, the *grandes nuits* were neither conceptually, nor stylistically very modern.²⁴⁷ In fact, these grand spectacles resembled the sumptuous *divertissements* hosted by Louis XIV at Versailles in the 1660s and 1670s much more

²⁴⁴ Cessac, "La Duchesse du Maine ou la Reine Didon," 495.

²⁴⁵ Ibid. On the relationship between Voltaire and the duchesse du Maine, see Couvreur, "Voltaire chez la duchesse ou Le goût à l'épreuve," in Cessac and Couvreur, 231–248.

²⁴⁶ Cessac, "La Duchesse du Maine ou la Reine Didon," 494–496.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

closely than any of the more fashionable Parisian theatrical genres of the early eighteenth century. Boldly reappropriating this outmoded theatrical medium used to glorify the king at the height of his political, cultural, and imperial prestige, the *grande nuits* center around the theme of the night and tell the story of the triumph of the night queen, played by the duchesse du Maine, over the setting sun, symbolizing the end of the reign of the Sun King and rise of the queen of Sceaux. Whereas the symbolic power of the sun had stood as a cornerstone of Louis XIV's absolutist monarchical identity for most of his reign, famously incarnated by the young sovereign himself in the *Ballet royal de la Nuit* in 1653, its triumphal meaning was inverted by the duchesse du Maine and the literary figures in her service. In one of the most explicitly subversive and anti-monarchical performances of the *Grandes Nuits*, presented during the festivities of the fourth *nuit*, a diplomatic delegation from the distant nation of Greenland, played by a group of young men dressed in heavy furs, address the duchesse du Maine with the following message:

Fame, who only comes to our land to announce the most pressing news, has told us of the virtues, the charms, and the inclinations of Your Serene Highness. We have know that she abhors the sun. People give various reasons why. Many say (and this is what we find the most probable), that your disagreement first came after an argument about the nobility, the origins, the brilliance, the beauty, and the excellence of your enlightenment. Whatever the cause we would find ourselves happy if the hatred that you have toward him bring you to retire to our lands, far away from him. . . . I therefore come to beg you, in the name of my nation, to add our country among your happy nations.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁸ “La Renommée, qui n'annonce chez nous que les nouvelles les plus rares, nous a instruits des vertus, des charmes et des inclinations de Votre Altesse Sérénissime. Nous avons su qu'elle abhorre le soleil. On en rapporte diversement la cause. Plusieurs veulent (et c'est ce qui nous a parus le plus vraisemblable), que votre mésintelligence soit d'abord venue d'avoir disputé ensemble de la noblesse, de l'origine, de l'éclat, de la beauté et de l'excellence de vos lumières. Quoi qu'il en soit nous nous estimerons heureux si la haine que vous lui portez vous dipose à vous retirer sur nos terres, éloignées de son aspect . . .

In this short piece, the duchesse du Maine is presented as a sovereign in search of a larger kingdom, who has been denied her rightful domain by the king of the sun who refuses to acknowledge her true nobility and excellency. The Greenlander delegation, however, recognizes the night queen's legitimacy and sovereignty, indicating that word of her supremacy over the sun king has been spread far and wide. The sun had begun to set; the world was ready to cheer on the empire of the night.

While the duchesse du Maine did not record her motivations for challenging the king so forcefully and publicly in the *grandes nuits* of 1714 and 1715, one possible impetus could have come from the intensifying conflict over the king's last will and testament. In the first decade of the duchesse du Maine's court at Sceaux, the subversive nature of her cultural program had been inspired by her desire to assert her autonomy and prestige as a *princesse du sang* and granddaughter of the Fronde, pursuing through monarchical parody what the duchesse de Montpensier had attempted through solitude and artillery fire. In spite of whatever ambitions she may have harbored between 1700 and 1710, she could not have seen any realistic path to a position of political authority. Between 1711 and 1712, however, the political and dynastic landscape of the French monarchy was dramatically altered through a rapid succession of tragedies. First, on April 14, 1711, Louis XIV's only son and the heir apparent, Louis, le Grand Dauphin, died of smallpox. Then, during the months of February and March 1712, the next two princes in the line of succession, Louis XIV's grandson and eldest great-grandson, both

Je viens donc vous supplier, au nom de toute ma nation, d'ajouter nos pays à vos heureux Etats." Jullien, 9.

perished during a measles outbreak. This left the two-year-old duc d'Anjou, the future Louis XV, as the heir to the French throne.

Over the remaining three years of the aging Sun King's life and reign, the attention of the royal court, the Parlements, and all other interested parties, the duchesse du Maine foremost among them, was fixed on the issue of the king's final will and testament. As the *dauphin*, or heir apparent, the duc d'Anjou, could not govern as king of France until he had reached the age of thirteen, the septuagenarian Louis XIV needed to determine the composition of the regency that would assume power in the likely event that he should period before his heir's thirteenth birthday in 1723. The legitimate candidate for the role of regent, according to precedent, was the king's nephew, Philippe, duc d'Orleans. However, the king did have an even closer descendant—his own son, albeit illegitimately born, the duc du Maine. Given that he had been legitimated by the king himself and raised to a specially created rank just below the *princes du sang*, was the duc du Maine not the best option for the regency? The duchesse du Maine certainly felt as much. However, in 1714, around the time of the first *Grandes Nuits de Sceaux*, the king's decision was made known. His nephew, Philippe d'Orléans was named president of a regency council responsible for governing during the future Louis XV's minority, while the duc du Maine, as an important member of the regency council, would be responsible for "looking after the safety, preservation, and education of the minor king" and for commanding the royal guard.²⁴⁹ While the role assigned to the duc du Maine in

²⁴⁹ Testament de Louis XIV, August 2, 1714, AE I/25, Archives Nationales, Paris, quoted in Katherine Crawford, *Perilous Performances: Gender and Regency in Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 144.

the king's will was certainly one of considerable influence and importance, the duchesse du Maine's personal ambition almost certainly left her feeling unsatisfied and, once again, resentful towards the Sun King's continued control over her destiny.

Following the king's death on September 1, 1715, Philippe d'Orléans, himself dissatisfied with his ceremonial title of president of the regency council, executed a scheme to secure complete control over the regency and strip the duc and duchesse du Maine of any political authority.²⁵⁰ In exchange for legally dissolving the regency council described in the will of the late Louis XIV, Philippe d'Orléans promised France's highest law court, the Parlement of Paris, that he would restore their right of remonstrance to the king, which Louis XIV had suspended. Philippe d'Orléans, supported by the Parlement but also the majority of princes, became sole regent of France under Louis XV's minority, revoking the political power of the duc and duchesse du Maine. When, three years later, in 1718, an interaction with the Spanish diplomat, Antonio del Giudice, prince of Cellamare, offered the duchess the opportunity to seize control of the regency through the intervention of the king of Spain, the ambitious duchess jumped at the chance. This poorly executed plot to overthrow the regent, Philippe d'Orléans, was quickly exposed by the regent's agents, who, on the morning of December 29, 1718, arrested and transported the duchesse du Maine to prison.²⁵¹ Although her time in prison at the château de Dijon lasted less than a year, the reign of the queen of Sceaux had come to an end.

²⁵⁰ Crawford, *Perilous Performances*, 145–147.

²⁵¹ Barbier, *Chronique de la Régence et du règne de Louis XV*, 1:26–28.

Five years after the arrest of the duchesse de Maine, Philippe d'Orléans died at the age of forty-nine and Louis XIV's thirteen-year-old great-grandson formally commenced his reign as Louis XV. The fifty-one-year reign of Louis XV would see a number of women ascend to positions of political influence, including Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson, marquise de Pompadour and Jeanne Bécu, comtesse du Barry. Reflecting on this bygone era of the *ancien régime* more than four decades after the revolution of 1789, the French painter Élisabeth Louise Vigée-Lebrun famously declared: "In fact, it is very difficult to convey an idea to-day of the urbanity, the graceful ease, in a word the affability of manner which made the charm of Parisian society forty years ago. The women reigned then; the Revolution dethroned them."²⁵² Indeed, much has been written about the status of women in France following the revolution, with many authors arguing that, in spite of the revolution's promise of liberty and equality, the social standing of women largely worsened following the events of 1789.²⁵³ But what was the status of women in the decades that followed the collapse of the duchesse du Maine's queendom of Sceaux in 1718? Did women truly "reign" as Vigée-Lebrun would suggest, and what impact, if any, did the oppositional strategies pursued by the daughters of the Fronde have on women's political participation in France under the reigns of Louis XV and Louis XVI?

²⁵² Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, *Memoirs of Madame Vigée Lebrun*, trans. Lionel Strachey (London, 1904), 49.

²⁵³ See Goodman, *Republic of Letters*, 11; Jane Abrey, "Feminism in the French Revolution," *American Historical Review* 80, no. 1 (February 1975): 43-62.

For Vigée-Lebrun, the women who “reigned” in pre-revolutionary France included *salonnières* like Madame Geoffrin and Madame du Deffand, aristocratic women of the court like the duchesse de Polignac, royal mistresses like the marquise de Pompadour and the countess du Barry, and, of course, Vigée-Lebrun’s most famous sitter, Queen Marie Antoinette. Notwithstanding the important political role that some scholars have attributed to *salonnières* or to royal mistresses like the marquise de Pompadour, one must draw a clear distinction between women who exerted political influence and women who reigned as sovereigns. Even in the case of her queen and patron, Marie Antoinette, Vigée-Lebrun’s remark that “women reigned” should not be interpreted literally, as the French queen’s position as Louis XVI’s consort accorded her no sovereign authority. Thus, while women in *ancien régime* France may have reigned symbolically as *salon* hostesses, or in the ritual sphere of the court, the women who reigned in Vigée-Lebrun’s nostalgic portrait of pre-revolutionary France could only operate within strictly defined feminine spaces on the periphery of the masculine domain of royal sovereignty.

The daughters of the Fronde examined in this study, however, established their sovereign identities, whether in the domains of literature, visual culture, ritual performance, or actual statecraft, based on strategies of monarchical and patriarchal opposition. The cultural strategies of opposition pursued by women like the duchesse de Montpensier, the Duchess of Savoy, and the duchesse du Maine would have a marked influence on the development of eighteenth-century political culture, an influence that would even be seen among the conservative members of the Académie Française—an

institution that would not admit a female academician until 1980. In the inaugural edition of the dictionary of the Académie Française, published in 1694 during the reign of Louis XIV, the entry for the word “frondeur” contained only a single definition:

FRONDEUR s. m. [a person] who throws stones with a slingshot. *The ancients used frondeurs among their troops.*²⁵⁴

It was this traditional definition of the word *fronde*, meaning slingshot, that led contemporaries to refer to the 1648 rebellion’s instigators, some of whom reportedly slung stones at the Palais Mazarin, as *frondeurs*.²⁵⁵ By 1762, however, the Académie Française had expanded its definition of “frondeur”, which appeared in the fourth edition of the academy’s dictionary with the following entry:

FRONDEUR. s.m. [a person] who throws stones with a slingshot. *The ancients used frondeurs among their troops* **The name *Frondeurs* is also given to those who speak against the Government** [emphasis mine]. *That’s one of the biggest frondeurs.*²⁵⁶

As an institution under royal patronage, the Académie Française would not specifically reference the anti-monarchical rebellions of the mid-seventeenth century in its definitions of “Fronde” or “Frondeur” until the publication of its sixth edition in 1835, forty-four years after the French Revolution. Yet, in spite of the French academy’s reluctance to remind members of the public of the armed rebellion perpetrated by many of its own

²⁵⁴ “FRONDEUR. s. m. Qui jette des pierres avec une fronde. *Les anciens se servoient de frondeurs parmi leurs troupes.*” *Le Dictionnaire de l’Académie française, dédié au Roy*, 1st ed (Paris: Coignard, 1694), 1:497.

²⁵⁵ Ranum 51-52.

²⁵⁶ “FRONDEUR. s.m. Qui jette des pierres avec une fronde. *Les Anciens se servoient de frondeurs dans leurs troupes. On appelle aussi Frondeurs, Ceux qui parlent contre le Gouvernement. C’ est un des plus grands frondeurs.*” *Le Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*. 4th ed (Paris, 1762), 1:787.

grandparents less than a century ago, the 1762 academy's formal recognition of "frondeur" as a term for an individual who challenges political authority shows that this secondary denotation had come into widespread usage by the mid-eighteenth century. This new political significance ascribed to the word "frondeur" reveals more than a superficial semantic shift. As a label for political dissidents that emerged within an absolutist monarchical state, the appearance of this subversive political definition in the fourth edition of the French academy's dictionary points to a major change in the political culture of *ancien régime* France. Through the strategies of monarchical opposition pursued by *frondeuses* like the duchesse de Montpensier and by daughters and granddaughters of the Fronde like the Duchess of Savoy and the duchesse du Maine, the term "frondeur" evolved from designating slingshot-wielding soldiers or the instigators of the rebellions of 1648-1652 to, by 1762, gaining acceptance as a term to describe a new type of political actor: a proto-revolutionary. Indeed, despite the patriarchal values that would come to pervade French revolutionary discourse, it should not be surprising that, throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the duchesse de Montpensier would be conflated with the revolutionaries of 1789 in visual depictions of the storming of the Bastille (fig. 58). Looking for historical models of revolutionary virtue, French painters, printmakers, and even children's schoolbook illustrators would reimagine the duchesse de Montpensier as a revolutionary leader leading the charge against royal despotism. More than a century after the Fronde, the Grande Mademoiselle had reprised her role as an *Amazone moderne*.



Figure 58. *The Grande Mademoiselle at the storming of the Bastille.* Engraving after a drawing by Alphonse de Neuville. ca. 1875. Illustration from François Guizot's *L'histoire de France depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'en 1789, racontée à mes petits enfants*, vol. 4 (Paris: 1875). Public Domain, via Google Books.

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