

# Rex Femineus

Militarism, Devotion, and the Sacral-Symbolic Logic of Empress Maria Theresa's Royal

Representations, 1740-1780



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Undergraduate Senior Thesis

Department of History

Columbia University in the City of New York

April 1, 2026

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*To my parents, Simona and Francesco – you are my strongest allies.*

I shall show the World my Fortitude, by opposing, to my latest Hour, the Perfidy of Allies, and the Malice of my Enemies!<sup>1</sup>

— Maria Theresa, 1741

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<sup>1</sup> Maria Theresa of Hungary, *Memoirs of the Queen*, 26.

## *Table of Contents*

Acknowledgements	iv
Notes on Translation	v
List of Figures	vi
<b><i>Introduction</i></b>	
Militant Awakenings: The Hungarian Alliance	1
<b><i>Chapter One</i></b>	
<i>Persona Mixta</i> : Dynastic and Angelic Portrayals	12
<b><i>Chapter Two</i></b>	
<i>Mater Castrorum</i> : Confessional Tethers of Reform	25
<b><i>Chapter Three</i></b>	
<i>Rex Feminus</i> : Ancien Régimes of Gender	45
<b><i>Epilogue</i></b>	
<i>Princeps Despoticus</i> : The Rise of Joseph II	64
<b><i>Bibliography</i></b>	67

Cover image: *Maria Theresa on Horseback*. Workshop of Martin van Meytens, ca. 1783. Oil on copper.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> van Meytens, *Maria Theresa*.

### *Acknowledgements*

The power of sacral-symbolic imagery has animated every civilization in history. In my life, this power was first felt alongside Veronica, Claire, Philip, Misha, Theo, and Josh, with whom I encountered the enduring force of ritual and devotion amidst the banners and quiet splendor of the Lady Chapel.

I am indebted to the Columbia University History Department, whose senior thesis fellowship enabled me to embark upon my adventure to the Austrian and Hungarian archives. I am grateful to Professor Christopher Brown for introducing me to the intricacies of the eighteenth century and its enchanting personalities. Professor Marwa Elshakry has kindly revised this project in all of its forms, and has encouraged me to find my voice within its feminist dimension. It is a great pleasure to express my gratitude to Professor Charly Coleman, whose extensive knowledge guided this inquiry and extended the scope of my analysis far beyond what I thought possible. Our conversations were a source of clarity, and your comments, Professor, have improved every page. The remaining errors, mistranslations, and misunderstandings are entirely my own.

I write for my mother, whose unwavering support ensures I stay true to our values in all that I do, and for my father, whose boundless enthusiasm and sense of adventure bring me great courage. I am grateful to Max, who indulged my frequent *Kaiserschmarrn* interludes in Vienna, and to Marí, who shares the Empress' ability to inspire immediate affection. My adventures with *les chevaliers* have enlivened my days at Columbia. Thank you to Giulio, for joining me in dreaming up a brave new world, and to Nick, whose strength taught us that almost anything can be resolved within a day. To Arthur, an endless source of perspective and *joie de vivre*, and to Anabelle, for embodying poise in the face of adversity. To my dear Ewa, whose example will perpetually extend my conception of friendship and feminism. Finally, I am indebted to the archivists in Gödöllő, Budapest, Schönbrunn, and Vienna, whose patience and humility guided my encounters with the past.

*Note on Translation*

Translations from German, French, Italian, and Latin are my own. The Hungarian works were kindly translated into English with the help of Mr. Tamás Csik of the National Archives of Hungary.

## *List of Figures*

Figure 1. *Maria Theresa on the Coronation Hill.*

Figure 2. *Imperial Royal Banners Bearing the Image of the Virgin Mary.*

Figure 3. *The Education of the Virgin.*

Figure 4. *Maria Theresa of Austria at the Age of 35.*

Figure 5. *Maria Theresa Memorial.*

Figure 6. *Badge of the Order of the Golden Fleece and Star of the Order of Saint Stephen.*

Figure 7. *Gem-decorated Cross of the Order of Saint Stephen, Worn by Its Grand Founder, Maria Theresa.*

Figure 8. *Patent of Nobility for Hadik I. András, Recipient of the Grand Cross of the Order of Maria Theresa.*

Figure 9. *Grassalkovich Coat of Arms.*

Figure 10. *Maria Theresa with Hungarian, Czech, and Austrian Regalia.*

Figure 11. *Portrait of Maria Theresa of Habsburg, Francis I, Holy Roman Emperor, and Their Thirteen Children.*

Figure 12. *Das Kaiserpaar Franz I. Stephan und Maria Theresia.*

Figure 13. *Diademed, Draped Bust of Cleopatra (Obverse) and Bare Head of Antony (Reverse).*

Figure 14. *Silver Denarius with Portrait of the Caesar Divi Filius (Octavian) Opposite That of the Divus Iulius (Julius Caesar).*

Figure 15. *Herzog Franz Stephan I. von Lothringen (1708–1765), in Ganzer Figur in Seinen Naturhistorischen Sammlungen.*

Figure 16. *Rococo Bracelet Commemorating the Coronation of Maria Theresa as Queen of Hungary*

## INTRODUCTION

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### **Militant Awakenings: The Hungarian Alliance**

Even the flowing Danube must have held its waters still on the evening of June 25th, 1741. It was here that the Hungarian nobles drew their sabres, and pointing them into the sky, roared: “*Vitam nostrum et sanguinem pro Rege nostro consecramus.*” They swore to dedicate their “life and blood” to their “King.” Yet the person to cross the river on their return to Austria that evening was not a king. She was a young Archduchess, soon to be the ruler of the Habsburg Empire. Unable to recognize a queen in law or custom, the Hungarian nobles had crowned Maria Theresa King of Hungary.

The speech that had roused the Hungarian nobles to action was penned by her in Latin just moments before its delivery atop coronation hill. Maria Theresa had called upon “the fidelity, the army, and the immemorial valor” of the Hungarians to defeat the threat of Prussia.<sup>3</sup> Her call to arms was staged within the archaic choreography of Hungarian kingship: brandishing the Sword of St. Stephen to the four corners of the realm, Maria Theresa became a spectacle of uncompromising martial authority. Yet her sword, a pre-eminent symbol of masculinity, was not the most compelling emblem displayed that evening. In her arms rested her infant son, Joseph, whose presence reframed the spectacle as an appeal for dynastic preservation.<sup>4</sup> The triumph of this martial and maternal performance can be read as a microcosm of Maria Theresa’s strategy of royal representation.

Empress Maria Theresa’s (r. 1740-1780) Hungarian coronation encapsulates her ability to realize herself on both sides of seemingly hardened political and social dichotomies. The Habsburg Empress was capable of projecting her persona across both sides of religious, political, and gender dualities. As a steadfast Catholic, Maria Theresa balanced her temporal, secular powers with the

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<sup>3</sup> Bassett, *For God and Kaiser*, 93.

<sup>4</sup> Voltaire, *The Age of Louis*, 60-61.

spiritual and eternal qualities of Habsburg rule. As a figure of the early Enlightenment, the Empress directed her subjects' energies towards the state through reforms, while relying on traditional dynastic loyalties to secure her power. The fluid nature of eighteenth-century gender allowed the Empress to incorporate both masculine and feminine elements into her royal representations.

By refusing to harden into social and political dichotomies, the Empress could project a calibrated persona to the diverse corners of her realm. It is this capacity to deploy multiple, even contradictory, forms of representation that enabled her to resonate with soldiers across every stratum of the Imperial-Royal Army (*Kaiserlich-Königliche Armee*, hereafter k.u.k army). Over the course of her reign, the Empress successfully amassed the most heterogeneous army in Europe, convincing faraway Hungarians, Croats, Italians, and Serbs to fight for her during the War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748) and the Seven Years' War (1756-1763). The success of her representational deployments proved decisive: Hungarian allegiance served as a catalyst for the renewal of Austria's alliance system and became the indispensable foundation upon which Austria sustained its eighteenth-century wars. The transcendence of dualities enabled the Empress to foster vertical ties between the crown and its commanders and soldiers, as well as horizontal ties of cohesion between ethnically and culturally diverse regiments.

The Empress ruled at a time during which soldiers were swayed by tides of dynasty and loyalty as opposed to prescribed national identities. The purpose of the first chapter is to explore manifestations of dynastic loyalty, and to assess the role of religious duality in fostering soldier devotion. The second chapter will unparcel the political duality, and delve into the Empress' military reforms. Maria Theresa's ability to elicit soldier loyalty by manifesting herself on either side of the gender dichotomy will be discussed in the final chapter. While my descriptions of feminine qualities are centered on the embodied roles of motherhood and conjugal identity, descriptions of "masculine" qualities draw from the contemporary writings of Joseph II and Voltaire, who

denounced the “frivolity” of women and claimed the roles of warrior and thinker were reserved for men.<sup>5</sup> It is in the final chapter that I renegotiate the use of the term *rex femineus*, and define it as a vessel through which the Empress could legitimately embody both genders.

Maria Theresa’s approach drew strength from the ambiguity of her age, which saw a reconfiguration of the modern state in relation to religion and reform. Caught between the enticing force of the Enlightenment and the familiar pull of confessional tradition, the Empress found herself upon an unsettled political landscape. She allowed herself to be cajoled by both sides and, as a commander who turns opposing fronts to her advantage, claimed a form of flexible political acuity distinct from that of her rivals.

The expressions of the Empress’ militarism can be divided into her *military character* and her *military persona*. The Empress’ *character* describes the internal logical processes she employed to consider war and the creation of allegiances, as well as the faculties of her nature that inspired combat. Her *persona* refers to the cult of her personality, which the vast majority of soldiers would have experienced through numismatic, artistic, and religious portrayals. The Empress’ *persona* will be the focus of this study, as her efforts to realize herself at the seams of the three dualities took place in this capacity. Unlike female rulers of her time, the Empress was not a monarch by marriage or coup, nor a regent until her successor’s maturity. This lent Maria Theresa’s imperial iconography a special urgency in that it was required to emphasize her rule as rightful and divinely ordained.<sup>6</sup> Much of my evidence will hence draw on portraits, coinage, and ceremonial gifts from the collections of Schönbrunn Palace, the Kunsthistorisches Museum, the Hungarian National Museum, and Gödöllő Palace. My reconstruction of the Empress’ relations with her soldiers will also rely on letters, diary entries, and nobility patents from the Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archives), Haus-, Hof - und Staatsarchiv (House, Court and State Archives), and the Hungarian National Archives.

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<sup>5</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 546; Voltaire, *Voltaire’s Philosophical*, 102.

<sup>6</sup> Yonan, *Empress Maria*, 4.

This study of royal representation rests on the scholarship of Michael Yonan, Lynn Hunt, and Abby Zanger, who claim the Empress' body can be conceived as multiple and diverse, and that diverse bodies were valuable to an imperial conception of rule.<sup>7</sup> While I agree that diverse bodies enhanced royal representation and served as sites of empowerment, I would add that embodiment can be performed through social relations including marriage, motherhood, and assertions of heritage. These relations came to represent new qualities of dynastic loyalty at a time when traditional tethers of religion and dynastic legitimacy were being called into question. Further, while most of these studies, including the critical work of Rachel Weil and Louis Montrose, explore the idea of multiple representations strictly within the political and social realm, I seek to demonstrate these royal representations fostered cohesion and loyalty in the military arena.

My study enters into dialogue with two major tendencies in the historiography of Maria Theresa. Derek Beales' work belongs to a tradition that understands the mid-to-late eighteenth-century Habsburg monarchy through reform and enlightened absolutism. Beales' authoritative biography on Joseph II describes the Empress, who would be Joseph's co-regent from 1765 to the end of her reign, as a political and ecclesiastical reformer. For Beales, the Empress can be understood as the impetus for a "movement for change...affecting many aspects of [the life of the Monarchy]."<sup>8</sup> Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger's recent biography shifts attention away from the Empress as a precursor to enlightened despotism to an interpretation of sacral-symbolic politics.<sup>9</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger shows the Empress' reformist powers cannot be understood apart from the symbolic and confessional languages through which they were staged. Rather than attempting to strengthen one side of this debate, I argue Maria Theresa's rule intertwined sacral-symbolic politics and reformist state-building. The Empress' projection of Catholic and dynastic legitimacy was at

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>8</sup> Beales, *Joseph II: In the Shadow*, 1:439.

<sup>9</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*.

once capable of stabilizing her rulership, and preparing the ideological and administrative pathways that would lead to Joseph's enlightened despotism.

My engagement with scholarship surrounding the religious duality seeks to expand the meaning of "representation." It is not passive representation that allowed the Empress to appear before soldiers, but an active kind of representation that enabled a perpetual reproduction of her presence. The history of the sacramental power of the monarchy runs from Ernst Kantorowicz's medieval analysis to Louis Marin's *Portrait of the King*. Kantorowicz's *The King's Two Bodies* posits royal representations began to borrow eternal qualities from divine entities.<sup>10</sup> This enabled them, for example, to borrow the qualities of the Eucharist, and hence share in its powers of transubstantiation. Kantorowicz's notion of borrowing complements Marin's claim that royal images can constitute and perform power.<sup>11</sup> A ruler cannot be everywhere at once, and their authority must circulate symbolically, allowing their portraits to become quasi-sacramental objects. The frame of Christian semiotics has not yet been used to describe the royal representation of the Habsburgs.

With regards to the political duality, my intervention sides with the historians who describe the Empress as a cautious reformer. Richard Bassett's framing of the Empress as *Mater Castrorum* emphasizes her dedication to reforming the military and fiscal apparatus.<sup>12</sup> Michael Hochedlinger and Franz A.J. Szabo's accounts align with Bassett's, as they describe the Empress' reforms as pragmatic geopolitical responses to an assertive Prussia. There has been a tendency among scholars to cast Catholic monarchies in the eighteenth century as either resistant or enlightened.<sup>13</sup> David Sorkin's work escapes this duality, and shows how enlightenment reform could occur within confessional frameworks.<sup>14</sup> Reforms arising from such confessional frameworks were not unencumbered by the antiquated tethers of tradition, and Stollberg-Rilinger readily notes the salutary

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<sup>10</sup> Kantorowicz, *The King's*, 43.

<sup>11</sup> Marin, *Portrait of the King*, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Bassett, *Maria Theresa*, 113.

<sup>13</sup> Hazard, *La Crise*.

<sup>14</sup> Sorkin, "Vienna-Linz: Joseph."

effects of some reforms on the population were “more often asserted than actually demonstrated.”<sup>15</sup> Still, it is inaccurate to reduce Austria’s impetus for reform to a mystical expression of religious fervor. While the Empress may not have been “state-building,” she had progress and reform in mind for her army. Her reforms would release a transformational dynamic that would generate its own accelerating momentum by the time of Joseph II’s reign.

A final historiographical engagement takes place in the somewhat fraught landscape of early modern gender scholarship. Most thinking around female rulership rests on the assumption that female rulership catalyzes a disruption of the regal office. Scholars including Carole Levin and Louis Montrose posit female monarchs maintained political legitimacy by symbolically inhabiting a fundamentally masculine conception of sovereignty. For these scholars, kingship remains a structurally masculine office, and female monarchs could sustain legitimacy by aligning themselves with the masculine norms embedded in sovereign office. A second strand of scholarship, championed by Stollberg-Rilinger, posits female monarchy did not simply replicate male kingship but instead generated a reconfigured feminine norm of sovereignty. The power of this newly reconfigured female seat lay in championing the monarch’s distinctly feminine capacities, such as the ability to be a mother, a wife, or a beauty. Both arguments are at odds with fluid eighteenth-century understandings of identity, a limitation that prevents them from explaining fully the Empress’ horizontal and vertical projections across the military landscape. Dror Wahrman’s work on the “ancien régime” of identity provides respite from this structure. Wahrman argues that gender in the eighteenth century was determined by performance in one’s social sphere, as opposed to one’s biological sex.<sup>16</sup> We can study this performance to discern how the Empress deployed different facets of gender to gain soldier loyalty and diffuse her persona.

In parallel, I engage with scholarship surrounding the term *rex femineus*. Benedek M. Varga is

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<sup>15</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 251.

<sup>16</sup> Wahrman, *The Making*, 198.

one of the few historians who questions the “curious sounding” title granted to the Empress during her Hungarian coronation: “Domina et Rex.”<sup>17</sup> To explain this dichotomy, scholars including Regina Schulte, Werner Telesko, and Christina Strunck use Kantorowicz’s distinction between the body politic and the body natural to explain the logical coexistence of these titles.<sup>18</sup> These authors overlook the realities of the Hungarian legal universe, which did not allow for a separation between the political and physical.<sup>19</sup> Varga shifts the course of the analysis to the specificities of the early modern intellectual context. He exposes the tradition of *rex femineus*, whereby a woman with royal power was granted the title of rex to assert equality with former male kings.<sup>20</sup> Tracing this tradition through the work of Charles Beem, Therese Martin, and Coral Lumbley reveals the *rex femineus* does not only describe a reigning queen, but a female king.<sup>21</sup> These scholars posit the term is encoded with gender-bending qualities that allow female rulers to effectively embody both genders, a conception in line with Wahrman’s fluid description of gender.<sup>22</sup> It is this coextensive definition of the *rex femineus* that will guide my analysis of the Empress’ imperial projection.

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<sup>17</sup> Varga, “Making Maria,” 234.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>21</sup> Beem, *The Lioness*, 4.

<sup>22</sup> Lumbley, “Imperatrix, Domina,” 72.



Figure 1. *Maria Theresa on the Coronation Hill*. Oil on canvas, mid-eighteenth century. Unknown artist. Gödöllő Palace.<sup>23</sup>

Maria Theresa led her troops into two of Europe's bloodiest conflicts. It is worth understanding the chronology of these conflicts, as well as the mechanisms whereby the Empress validated her territorial claims. On October 20, 1740, the Empress' father, Charles VI, passed away, leaving his daughter with serious military and financial difficulties. He left vacant the rule over his many lands and the elected office of the holy Roman Emperor. The Empress inherited the hereditary lands (*Erbländer*), a patchwork of territories including the lands of the Bohemian Crown (Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia), the ancient hereditary lands of the Crown of St. Stephen (Hungary,

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<sup>23</sup> Unknown Artist, *Maria Theresa*.

Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia), including the regions of Transylvania and the Banat won back from the Turks; as well as the Italian principalities (the duchies of Milan, Mantua, Parma, Piacenza) and Tuscany through her husband Francis Stephen. She also ruled the “Austrian” or “German” hereditary lands consisting of two archduchies above and below the Enns River and the duchies of Styria, Carinthia, and Carniola as well as Further Austria. Most of these territories belonged to the Holy Roman Empire, allowing the Empress to claim an unofficial role in its protection. The official title of Holy Roman Emperor was secured by her husband, Francis Stephen in 1745, and was subtly “borrowed” by the Empress in some of her royal representations to enhance her legitimacy. The entire dominion encompassed a landmass of 630,000 square kilometers, a vast distance for an Empress who rarely traveled.<sup>24</sup>

Her journey across the Danube in 1741 had been out of dire necessity emerging from the outbreak of the War of Austrian Succession. Charles VI had left his daughter with a Pragmatic Sanction intended to prevent the fracturing of the hereditary lands, whose defense was to be supplied by a Pragmatic Army. As Stollberg-Rilling explains, every form of “gynocracy” was an open invitation to relatives or neighbors to register their rival claims to power, on the pretext that women were constitutionally unfit to govern.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, European monarchs including Frederick the Great and the Elector of Bavaria Karl Albrecht were already hatching plans to delegitimize her. As Albrecht traveled to France to make appeals of an alliance to the French Court, King Frederick of Prussia seized the opportunity to invade Silesia on December 16, 1740.<sup>26</sup> It is perhaps this moment that ignited Maria Theresa’s military *character*. The Empress’ diary entry from 1741 is a crude expression of her rage: ‘Scarce was my Father cold in his Grave, but I had Advice, that Pr\_\_\_ had marched an Army into Silesia, to seize on that Dutchy as his Right. The Rage and Passion I was in is

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>26</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 90.

not to be express'd!<sup>27</sup> In the same diary entry, the Empress likens her sadness to that of Andromache, the wife of Hector in Homer's *Iliad*.<sup>28</sup> The choice of Andromache, a symbol of domestic mourning, reveals the Empress' initial self-conception as a victim of attack as opposed to an emboldened martial authority. Her wrath towards Frederick can hence be viewed as the impetus for the development of her military *persona*.

The Empress ignored Frederick's requests for ceding Silesia, and mounted a successful attack near Mollwitz on April 10. Prussia's defeat prompted the formation of an anti-Habsburg coalition, joined by Queen Elizabeth of Spain, the House of Bourbon, the Bavarians, the Saxons, and Saxony-Poland. Britain, in personal union with the Electorate of Hannover, and Russia initially abstained from the conflict as they were preoccupied with their respective wars against Spain and Sweden.<sup>29</sup> It was during this period that Maria Theresa spent months in Hungary to secure its support. Their zealous drawing of the sabres marked the beginning of Austrian military ascent, but the state of the army meant Austria struggled to assert itself on the battlegrounds of Silesia, Bohemia and Bavaria.<sup>30</sup> Silesia was eventually signed away to Frederick, while Parma, Piacenza, and Guastalla were lost to the Spanish. Despite these losses, the Empress' throne was secured.

The Treaty of Aachen that concluded the War of Austrian Succession was by no means an antidote to Maria Theresa's wrath. Following nearly ten years of military and political reforms led by her minister, Friedrich Wilhelm von Haugwitz (1702-1765), the Empress' government was prepared to fulfil its single goal of humiliating Prussia. The artificer of this "statecraft from a single principle" was State Chancellor Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz (1711-1794), who aimed to overturn the European Great Power rivalry between the Habsburgs and the Bourbons to forge a grand coalition against Prussia. Meanwhile, tensions between France and Britain rose as each aimed to establish dominance

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<sup>27</sup> Maria Theresa of Hungary, *Memoirs of the Queen*, 15.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>29</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 109.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

in West Africa, India, the colonies in North America and the Caribbean.<sup>31</sup> Frederick's alliance with England on January 16, 1756 gave Louis XV the final push to accept Kaunitz's defensive alliance. About three months after the start of the Seven Years' War in the British and French theaters, the war came to Austria as Frederick marched into Saxony on August 29 1756.<sup>32</sup> Saxony, part of the holy land, capitulated to Frederick by the end of the year, prompting the Imperial Diet to declare a *Reichskrieg* against Frederick II. With the French and the Russians on her side, Maria Theresa delivered an historic victory at the battle of Kolín in the summer of 1757. By the autumn of the war's second year, Frederick was encircled: France and the imperial army to the west, Sweden to the north, Russia to the east, and the Habsburg lands to the south. He overturned his losses at the battles of Rossbach (1757) and Leuthen (1757), and was marching into Moravia by 1758, only to be countered by the Austrians at the Battle of Kunersdorf in 1759. The death of Tsarina Elizabeth led to the accession of pro-Prussian Peter III, who promptly made peace on Frederick's eastern front. Sweden followed suit, leaving Frederick time to raise fresh troops to reverse Austria's wins. He regained control of both Silesia and Saxony, and his 1762 victory at Döbeln pulled Austria out of Saxony to protect Bohemia. The Treaty of Hubertusburg (1763) ended the war in Europe, and restored antebellum conditions, although Frederick refused to compensate Saxony for the widespread devastation it had suffered under the war.<sup>33</sup>

Throughout the course of the Empress' forty year reign, well over a million soldiers defended the Habsburg hereditary lands. Though the efficacy of formal recruitment and conscription structures need not be overlooked, it was the Empress' ability to transcend religious, political, and gender dichotomies that allowed her to expand and sustain Europe's most diverse army.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 406.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 411.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 433.

## CHAPTER ONE

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### *Persona Mixta: Dynastic and Angelic Portrayals*

The soldiers' initial commitment to the Empress' cause can be explained by the fact her wars allowed them to defend the powerful Habsburg dynasty and partake in its Catholic religion. The first pillar in understanding the bonds of loyalty between the Empress and her military is the affection towards the Habsburg dynasty. This quality, which I term dynastic loyalty, stemmed from ideas of honor and allegiance. The Empress employed sacral-symbolic representations of religion to accentuate this bond. Dynastic loyalty gave form to the imperial body of the Habsburg eagle, while honor and religion furnished the claws with which soldiers defended and extended the authority of the crown.

Dynastic loyalty, an affective bond to a series of pre-national heterogeneous territories, served to tighten Maria Theresa's highly militarized war machine. This sentiment was capable of fostering cohesion among a remarkably heterogeneous soldiery. The careful stationing of soldiers to appropriate territories, as well as the emergence of the citizen soldier and increased permeability of cultural zones, allowed the Empress to use her dual nature as preserver of traditionalism and champion of reform to blur the boundaries between territorial loyalty and devotion to the crown.

Recent scholarship on the Habsburg monarchy's effort to unify the imperial state has found that "regional identities within the monarchy were co-opted by the dynasty to bind together its many peoples."<sup>34</sup> These regional identities coalesced to form a "provincial consciousness" that acted as the cinder for dynastic loyalty. Central among these unifying currents was a shared anti-Ottoman political culture. Longstanding frontier warfare against the Ottoman Empire between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries provided soldiers from disparate regions with a common civilizational

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<sup>34</sup> Baird, "According to the Strict," 39.

narrative that framed military service as the defense of Christendom.<sup>35</sup> The imperial administration also harnessed territorial loyalty to ensure efficient, devoted fighting. Kurt Baird challenges the common notion that Habsburg troops were constantly rotated around the lands to prevent the creation of local ties. In reality, regiments were closely associated with specific crown lands, estates, and recruitment districts, ensuring that soldiers fought alongside men who shared local customs and dialects. Indeed, no Walloon units ever left the Austrian Netherlands, and the Monarchy's two Italian regiments were always based in Austrian Lombardy.<sup>36</sup> Far from undermining unity, this localization strengthened discipline, trust, and morale, anchoring loyalty within horizontal social structures while directing it upwards towards the dynasty.<sup>37</sup>

The standing army serves perhaps as the best example of the horizontal mechanisms of loyalty exploited by the Empress. Each part of the standing army was symbiotically linked to society through logistical processes that relied on mobilizing resources through corporate organizations and local institutions.<sup>38</sup> Local identities were based on “regionalism fostered within regiment by the way in which men were locally recruited” and “reinforced through public military displays which identified these military communities as a region’s ‘locus of loyalty.’”<sup>39</sup> These extended communities created a “horizontal plane of loyalty” that stretched across the empire’s regiments.<sup>40</sup> By the beginning of the Seven Years’ War, the k.u.k army had become a “cultural zone for social interaction and various transfers, since soldiers from many nations [...] were given the opportunity to travel.”<sup>41</sup> The permeable nature of cultural zones meant soldiers across the realm were welcomed into these loci of loyalty. This enabled diverse cultures to flourish within a grand system, therefore facilitating the recruitment of foreign soldiers. These foreign recruits were indispensable to the k.u.k regular

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<sup>35</sup> Yonan, *Empress Maria*, 137.

<sup>36</sup> Hochedlinger, *Austria's Wars*, 306.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 308.

<sup>38</sup> Baird, “According to the Strict,” 40.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Brnardić, “The Seven,” 136.

army, which boasted a nominal strength of approximately 180,000 soldiers. Between 1756 and 1763, the army sustained an overall loss-rate of over 200 percent, almost half of which could be recuperated by foreign recruits.<sup>42</sup> Voluntary enlistment of local and foreign troops can be observed after the close of the War of Austrian succession, at a time where the endurance of these loci of loyalty would have been proven by the eight year war.<sup>43</sup> Hence, after 1748, service to Maria Theresa became legible as both a defense of one's homeland and an act of fidelity to the crown.

The emergence of citizen soldiers further fuelled dynastic loyalty. Equipped with the motivating ethos of state citizenship (*Staatsbürger*), soldiers and officers were driven to “fight by duty, virtue, and the community awarded to them as citizen soldiers (*Soldat Bürger*).”<sup>44</sup> As Baird argues, the wartime role and identity of regular soldiers became a focus for regional and dynastic loyalty, “encouraging subjects to embrace and reaffirm their commitment to the Habsburg state and its pluralistic, organic hierarchies.”<sup>45</sup> The *rex femineus*'s ability to simultaneously preserve the traditional values of monarchy and while innovatively championing regional belonging allowed her to harmonize the relation between militarism and a duty to both the local homelands and the crown. The *Staatsbürger* identity did not preclude the holding of multiple national identities: one could be a Hungarian subject *and* a *Staatsbürger* belonging to the moral-administrative community of the Habsburg empire. This “step-wise” patriotism, as Brian Vick defines it, allowed familial, professional, and communal loyalties within subregions to combine and manifest regional identities.<sup>46</sup> Being a subject of the Empress, hence, meant fostering allegiances within local communities while acknowledging these existed due to the protection offered by the House of Habsburg. Leighton James' accounts of Habsburg cavalry officers suggest that in order to be

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<sup>42</sup> Hochedlinger, *Austria's Wars*, 301.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

<sup>44</sup> Baird, “Fighting for the Habsburgs,” i.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Vick, *The Congress*, 40–52, 250, 273–74.

successful in raising recruitment, the prestige granted by the citizen soldier status needed to be paired with rhetoric of personal honor.<sup>47</sup>

A second source of dynastic loyalty was the soldiers' desire to defend the Catholic faith. The ancient tenet of *pietas austriaca* asserted God had selected the Habsburgs for rule over their peers because of their exceptional piety. The darker side of this perceived duty led the Habsburgs to reinforce Catholicism in all imperial territories; the Empress' infamous persecution of the Jews, as well as the destruction of the Jesuits's monopoly over censorship and university education displayed her unwavering conviction in the superiority of her faith.<sup>48</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger's interpretation of Maria Theresa correctly situates her as a staunch preserver of Catholic doctrine within the atmosphere of Enlightenment tolerance.<sup>49</sup> Still, the duality of the Empress' religious persona, and its efficacy in sustaining soldier loyalties, remains unexplored.

The Empress embodied both spiritual, eternal qualities, and temporal, secular powers. It is by operating on both sides of this duality that the Empress was able to successfully project her religious image. Her sacral-symbolic representations reached the soldiers across her realm, and endowed dynastic loyalty with a quasi-physical quality. In *The King's Two Bodies*, Kantorowicz distinguishes between Christ-centered kingship and polity-centered kingship. His discussion of Christ-centered kingship introduces the concept of the ruler as *persona mixta*, able to blend their spiritual, eternal powers with their temporal, secular powers. Emperors were both political figures and sacred entities "crowned by God" *ad praedicandum aeterni regis evangelium* ("to preach the Gospel of the Eternal King").<sup>50</sup> Applying the *persona mixta* persona to Maria Theresa, we may posit her acquired title of Holy Roman Empress and her resolve to associate herself with religious figures like the Virgin Mary speak to her eternal nature as a messenger of God. She was "taught from the earliest

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<sup>47</sup> James, "War, Experience," 41-58; James, "Die Koalitionskriege," 221-42.

<sup>48</sup> Beales, *Joseph II: In the Shadow*, 1:441; Sorkin, "Vienna-Linz: Joseph," 222.

<sup>49</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 565; Coreth, *Pietas Austriaca*, 55-6.

<sup>50</sup> Kantorowicz, *The King's*, 68.

childhood to equate the interest of the All-highest Archducal house with the divine will,” and her persona thus acquired an *angelicus videlicet et humanus* (namely, angelic and human) quality.<sup>51</sup> The notion of *persona mixta* exposes the religious dimension of the *rex femineus*.

Combining Kantorowicz’s theory with Stollberg-Rilinger’s sacral-symbolic approach allows us to better express the efficacy of royal projection. Kantorowicz explains that spiritual and secular leaders of Christian society in the Middle Ages reinforced their cross-relations through mutual borrowings and exchanges of insignia, political symbols, and rights of honor. These borrowings affected ruling individuals until, by the time of Maria Theresa, the “sacerdotium had an imperial appearance and the regnum a clerical touch.”<sup>52</sup> Royal representations could hence begin to borrow the eternal qualities of divine entities, and in doing so would increase their power of projection. The divine entity of the Eucharist, and its quality of transubstantiation, provide an example of this exchange. The doctrine of transubstantiation emphasized the real presence of both the human and the divine Christ in the Eucharist.<sup>53</sup> The Eucharist, or *corpus mysticum* eventually turned into the idea of the “mystical body of the Church, the head of which is Christ,” an idea that writers of the late Middle Ages replaced with “the mystical body of the republic, the head of which is the Prince.”<sup>54</sup> This corporal unity with the state was fully realized by the Empress’ time, during which the responsibility of the body to sacrifice itself for the head was taken as seriously as the head’s responsibility to hold its life to sacrifice.<sup>55</sup> Like the Eucharist, Maria Theresa’s royal representations carried the real presence of the human and divine Empress, which could be replicated *ad infinitum* across her realm. This process of royal transubstantiation was at the heart of maintaining the dynastic loyalty and zeal of her distant troops. If her imperial majesty was as present in the diamond

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<sup>51</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 399; Kantorowicz, *The King’s*, 43, 45.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

of Palatine Pálffy's ring as she was in the emerald of Count Daun's Grand Cross, then Hungary would feel close to Vienna.

The idea of royal representation taking root in Christian eucharistic theology has been explored by historians of imperial France, but many parallels are to be drawn with Austria. Louis Marin's *Portrait du Roi* explores how royal representation hold the "double power" of rendering anew and "imaginarily present," not to say living, the absent, and that of constituting their own "legitimate and authorized subject by exhibiting qualifications, justifications, and titles of the present and living to being."<sup>56</sup> Marin applies Catholic doctrine, including transubstantiation, to show that portraits of Louis XVI could become sites of sovereign presence.<sup>57</sup> Peter Burke's analysis of Louis XIV offers another comparative model for understanding the Empress' representations. Burke describes how eighteenth-century Europe suffered from a "crisis of representations." A component of this crisis stemmed from the fact that as Western intellectuals began to view the world as a vast machine, there was a "decline of magic" that made it difficult to put images of rulers in "correspondence" with classical or religious entities. This discussion has not been brought into contact with Habsburg representations. In Renaissance times, if a ruler was compared to Venus it did not just mean they were beautiful, but that they were connected and in "correspondence" with the goddess.<sup>58</sup> The intellectual revolutions of the seventeenth century, which took place in France, England, the Dutch Republic, and northern Italy increased the skepticism on part of the elites about the efficacy of such magic in royal representations.<sup>59</sup> Austria did not follow suit: the Empress was keen to identify herself through networks of classical figures, including Minerva. The appearance of her statuettes in Maria Theresa's imperial portraiture and coinage ensured the Empress was in correspondence with the goddess of wisdom and strategic warfare.<sup>60</sup> Minerva's statue served as a vessel for imperial

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<sup>56</sup> Marin, *Portrait of the King*, 6.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>58</sup> Burke, *The Fabrication*, 127.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>60</sup> Fabiankowitsch, "Striking Images," in *Die Medaillenproduktion*, 60

transubstantiation: in Pompeo Batoni's 1770 copy of Joseph II and Leopold, the artist inserts a sculpture of Minerva, visually asserting the Empress' continued control over Habsburg diplomacy despite her recently diluted status as co-regent.<sup>61</sup> Applying the results of imperial French historians shows Austria's royal representations were not as compromised by the onset of modernity. We may now begin to understand Maria Theresa's rule as fundamentally embedded in ritualized Catholic political culture, rather than modern state rationality.

Maria Theresa's most prolific "correspondence" was with none other than the Virgin Mary. The Virgin was central to the Habsburgs' dynastic identity, as they believed her to be the "sovereign of all emperors."<sup>62</sup> The Empress' representation through the Virgin Mary was successful in evincing both vertical and horizontal ties of cohesion. Every soldier and high officer in the Catholic lands was familiar with the holy mother; and frequent Church services offered within the army's loci of loyalty ensured a horizontal diffusion of her image.<sup>63</sup>

The cult of the Virgin was flourishing throughout Habsburg lands. The historic city of Mariazell was a prominent destination for pilgrimage, and by the eighteenth century, devotional images of its statues and treasuries had become objects of cultic devotion.<sup>64</sup> Even Maria Theresa and her father, Charles VI, made pilgrimages to this holy site in an attempt to influence their family's fertility through prayer.<sup>65</sup> Importantly, the soldier population would have been familiar with the militaristic connotations associated with the Virgin, who was portrayed as the symbolic *generalissima* of the imperial army in its battles against the Ottomans.<sup>66</sup> Drawing on this shared Marian state language, Maria Theresa replaced the Imperial eagle on her military standards with the image of the Madonna (Figure 2).<sup>67</sup> Given the holy nature of the Virgin, we may interpret this symbolic strategy

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<sup>61</sup> Florek, review, 60.

<sup>62</sup> Coreth, *Pietas Austriaca*, 55-6.

<sup>63</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 565.

<sup>64</sup> Zika, "The Treasury," 71.

<sup>65</sup> Frank, "The Pleasant," 162, 164.

<sup>66</sup> Mutschlechner, "Magna Mater," *The World of the Habsburgs*.

<sup>67</sup> Bassett, *For God and Kaiser*, 96.

through the work of Kantorowicz and Marin: though the Empress could not join her troops in battle, the image of the Mary, initiated a “correspondence” with the Empress that made her “imaginarily present” to her soldiers. This royal presence could be reproduced *ad infinitum*, from the fronts at Mollwitz to Kesselsdorf and Prague. It is likely her resolve to appear present on the battlefield was motivated by the involved nature of her opponent, Frederick the Great, who often joined his troops in battle. Invoking the image of the Virgin allowed the Empress to address this discrepancy.



Figure 2. *Imperial Royal Banners Bearing the Image of the Virgin Mary*. Mid-eighteenth century. Heeresgeschichtliches Museum, Vienna.<sup>68</sup>

A reading of Alphonsus Liguori’s *The Glories of Mary*, published ten years into the Empress reign, helps us understand just why the Empress chose to be represented through her. This widely disseminated defense of Marian devotion circulated throughout the Habsburg lands and, although most soldiers were unlikely to encounter the text directly, its interpretations of the Virgin were

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<sup>68</sup> *Imperial Royal*.

transmitted through sermons and catechisms.<sup>69</sup> Liguori describes the Virgin as a mother who can “defend[...] and protect[...]” her fearful subjects from the “sword of the enemy.”<sup>70</sup> Mary is portrayed as being all-inclusive and all-embracing: “be joyful then, all ye children; of Mary; remember that she adopts as her children; all those who wish her for their mother.”<sup>71</sup> The expansive scope of Mary’s protection is not dissimilar to that of the Empress. As ruler of a composite monarchy commanding one of Europe’s most diverse armies, the Empress needed to transcend dynastic genealogy. By presenting herself as a maternal figure to Hungarians, Croats, and other non-German subjects, she could symbolically incorporate them as “adoptive” children of the crown, thereby reducing the salience of ethnic or regional difference. Framing herself as an “adopt[ive]” parent reduced the importance of blood ties to the Habsburgs, enabling the soldiers to take up new identities as children of her realm. Notions of inclusion strengthened horizontal loyalty. Being able to take on new roles as the children of the Empress allowed the soldiers to construct their own dynamics of “step-wise” patriotism.<sup>72</sup> Like the Virgin, the Empress required loyalty in exchange for broad protection. Liguori writes “she in her sorrow brought us forth to eternal life; so that we may all call ourselves children; of the dolors of Mary.”<sup>73</sup> In likening herself to the Virgin, the Empress invited her subjects to share in her sorrows, including the loss of Silesia. In this light, declarations of loyalty like the Hungarian pledge of “life and blood” can be read not merely as feudal obligations but as participation in a sacralized familial bond.

The Empress secured her ties to the Virgin Mary through demonstrations of her adoration. On her return from the Hungarian coronation in 1741, for example, the Empress paused to kneel before the Marian column in Pressburg before continuing to the Franciscan church as the newly

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<sup>69</sup> “St. Alphonsus,” Redemptorist; Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 565-6.

<sup>70</sup> Liguori, *The Glories*, 46.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Vick, *The Congress*, 40-52, 250, 273-74.

<sup>73</sup> Liguori, *The Glories*, 43.

crowned “king.”<sup>74</sup> While the Virgin allowed the Empress to amplify her presence by sharing in her divinity, the Empress was also impressing a human quality onto the image of the Virgin. Anna Coreth and Kyra Belán note that eighteenth-century artists were free to explore secular themes, which led to an amalgamation between the human and the divine.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, Belán notes Mary’s divine characteristics were exalted alongside her human qualities, including intelligence and fecundity. Though themes of the immaculate conception and the Madonna and Child remained popular among eighteenth-century artists, there was a rise in depictions of the Education of the Virgin (Figure 3).<sup>76</sup> The emphasis placed on the intellectual life of young Mary may have also been an attempt to elevate the holy figure to the rational standards of the Enlightenment.<sup>77</sup> Mary’s intellectual endeavors were not dissimilar to the moral and intellectual endeavors of the Empress, many of which were evident in her educational reforms.<sup>78</sup> Returning to Kantorowicz, the correspondence between Mary and the Empress allowed for “mutual borrowing” of eternal and temporal qualities. The humanity granted to the Virgin through contemporary works would have made her comparison with the Empress more plausible. In turn, the Empress could share in Mary’s image to conduct sacral statecraft.

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<sup>74</sup> Van Gelder, “Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century,” 126.

<sup>75</sup> Belán, “The Eighteenth,” 181; Coreth, *Pietas Austriaca*, 55-56.

<sup>76</sup> Belán, “The Eighteenth,” 185.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Brnardić, “The Upbringing,” in *Croatian Institute*.



Figure 3. *The Education of the Virgin*. Oil on canvas by Jean-Baptiste Jouvenet, 1700. Uffizi Gallery, Florence.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Jouvenet, *The Education*.

The innovative nature of this religious correspondence must not be overlooked. Yonan reveals the visualized connection between monarchical women and God was “not automatic for the female monarchy” and that any symbolic connections drawn between the Empress and the divine prior to the 1750s were an act of innovation.<sup>80</sup> Yonan’s analysis of Martin van Meyten’s 1752 portrait reveals the Empress was appealing to divine connections from the start of the interwar years (Figure 4). In the upper right corner of the painting, drawn faintly on a partially visible roundel, is the Eye of God. The triangular symbol has a disembodied eye-ball at its center that radiates light upon the altar beneath it. Resting upon this altar are a sword and cornucopia.<sup>81</sup> The presence of the Eye of God cast the monarch as a “manifestor of the divine will on earth, a concept that enabled monarchical activity to carry the appearance of heavenly sanction,” thus connecting the Empress’ rule to the legitimizing dynastic tenet of *pietas austriacae*.<sup>82</sup> The presence of cornucopia and the sword below it strengthens the association between the Habsburg’s Catholic faith and the ideas of war and peace. This suggests that even before her correspondence with the *generalissima*, the Empress was keen to establish a connection between her defense of religion and her championing of militarism. The inclusion of the Eye of God in this early portrait suggests the connection between dynasty, militarism, and religion informed the Empress’ *persona* from the start of her reign.

The Empress’ ability to associate her royal representations with the divine allowed for a horizontal diffusion of her military persona. Paired with appeals to dynastic honor and prestige granted by the k.u.k army, these incentive mechanisms served as the foundation for dynastic loyalty among the officer and soldier corps. Maria Theresa would use the interwar years to strengthen the scope of these confessional and honorary frameworks.

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<sup>80</sup> Yonan, *Empress Maria*, 37.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 38.



Figure 4. *Maria Theresa of Austria at the Age of 35*. Oil on canvas by Martin van Meytens, 1752–1753. Schönbrunn Palace, Hall of Memories, Vienna.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> van Meytens, *Maria Theresia*.

## CHAPTER TWO

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### *Mater Castrorum: Confessional Tethers of Reform*

We have seen how the Empress could rely on ancient traditions of dynasty and religion to inspire horizontal and vertical ties of loyalty within her military. While appeals to religion and dynasty were essential in grounding the Empress' early persona in the eternal symbolism of the Habsburg family, this alone cannot explain her ability to inspire soldiers from across Europe into battle. We will now turn to the more concrete, practical mechanisms whereby the Empress made her presence known. A series of military, fiscal, and educational reforms swept across the Habsburg lands during the interwar years (1748-1756). The study of these novel political mechanisms has inspired debate among historians as to whether the Empress can primarily be seen as a traditionalist or a reformer. Derek Beales' work situates the Empress within the trajectory of enlightened absolutism that would culminate under Joseph II, whereas Barabara Stollberg-Rilinger emphasizes the symbolic and confessional foundations of the Empress' reforms, casting doubt on teleological readings that portray her reign chiefly as a precursor to Josephism. My approach seeks to recast the Empress as an absolutist with a reformist spirit ignited by her military losses, who pursued novel strategies for bettering her soldiers' lives while grounding her approach within confessional frameworks. The Empress' representational innovations with regards to religion entailed personalizing a traditional loyalty mechanism by situating it within a humanist reality. Her innovations with regards to military administration take on a diametrically opposed approach: the Empress sought to personalize novel loyalty mechanisms by fastening them to ancient traditions.

The work of Richard Bassett is particularly helpful in connecting the Empress' religious persona to her reformist spirit. He notes the interwar years allowed the Empress to combine her image as the Mother of Austria and her religious appeal as the Mother of Christ to invent *Mater*

*Castrorum*, a Mother of War possessing all the divine prestige and purity of motive of the Virgin Mary.<sup>84</sup> In the same way the *persona mixta* identity illuminates the religious duality of the *rex femineus*, the *Mater Castrorum* title provides an analytical frame through which to assess the Empress' dual role as a reformer and preserver of tradition. To understand how the *Mater Castrorum* evinced the loyalties of her fighting corps, it is worth reconstructing the contemporary religious landscape that bound the limits of her reformist ambitions.

Our interwar inquiry takes place during the first wave of the Empress' religious reforms. Though novel, her reforms remained "manifestations of traditional Habsburg aristocratic absolutism."<sup>85</sup> David Sorkin's work allows us to reconcile Beales' portrayal of an enlightened Empress with Stollberg-Rilinger's confessional reading by situating her reforms within a confessional framework. Sorkin demonstrates the emergence of Enlightenment ideas was not antithetical to Catholicism, as reform could be fostered by religious institutions. The interwar years saw the rise of Reform Catholicism, defined by Sorkin as "an effort at a second humanist reform aimed at altering the post-Tridentine Catholicism identified with the scholasticism and theology of the Jesuits and the Baroque culture of brotherhoods, cults, pilgrimages, and processions."<sup>86</sup> It offered intellectual alternatives of Enlightenment science (Copernicus, Newton) and philosophy (Leibniz-Wolff, Locke, and eventually Kant), the idea of toleration, and a "new pastoral ideal of reasonable devotion grounded in literacy."<sup>87</sup> Though its origins were almost exclusively monastic, Reform Catholicism coincided with rises in literacy levels and educational reform that encouraged disciplined, textually grounded religious practice, enabling its ideal of "reasonable devotion" to extend its influence beyond clerical circles into the social strata from which the Habsburg army was drawn. In this context, the novelty of the Empress' policies would have been intelligible to soldiers because they

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<sup>84</sup> Bassett, *For God and Kaiser*, 96.

<sup>85</sup> Sorkin, "Vienna-Linz: Joseph," 225.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 218-219.

operated within a confessional culture already undergoing reform.

The Reform Catholicism harnessed by the Empress and her advisors catalyzed a “process of transforming the monarchy from confessional absolutism to state absolutism.”<sup>88</sup> State Chancellor Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz and Friedrich Wilhelm von Haugwitz led her fiscal and military reforms; Gerard van Swieten (1700-1772) was the artificer of her university reforms (1749-60); and Leopold Joseph von Daun (1705-1766) and Ludwig Andreas von Khevenhüller (1683–1744) advised on military reform.<sup>89</sup> Of Haugwitz, Johann Christoph von Bartenstein (1689-1767), Emanuel Silva-Tarouca (1691-1771), and Wilhelm Reinhard von Koch (1698-1759) she wrote, “until my last breath, I shall forever be grateful towards these four characters [...] for their service to me and the state.”<sup>90</sup> To this day, the Empress’ statue rests at the center of her advisory circle (Figure 5). I will draw on the work of Richard Bassett, Michael Hochedlinger, and Franz A.J. Szabo to assess how the creation of educational reforms, meritocratic military orders, and personal engagements and inducements to the officer corps strengthened the image of the Empress reformer and fostered ties of dynastic loyalty among her soldiers.

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>90</sup> Badinter, *Maria Teresa*, 133.



Figure 5. *Maria Theresa Memorial*. Statue, 1888. Maria-Theresien-Platz, Vienna.<sup>91</sup>

The Empress' early military and administrative reforms lay the groundwork for her more innovative army reforms. Maria Theresa “[could] not begin to describe” the initial conditions of her army: “you would hardly believe it but not the slightest attempt had been made to establish uniformity among our troops.”<sup>92</sup> The k.u.k army inherited by the Empress was a conglomeration of confounding bodies: the Hungarians maintained the right to raise their own noble levy; the Austrian Netherlands, Bohemia and Moravia provided provincial regiments; the Pandours provided irregular light infantry; and Switzerland and Italy provided mercenaries.<sup>93</sup> The Empress, alongside von Haugwitz, would spend the majority of the interwar years and half of Vienna's GDP to develop the civil and military administration into a cogent fighting force of almost 500,000 men.<sup>94</sup> It had come as a shock to Maria Theresa that Frederick could support his entire army for a full year on Silesian revenues, and the “inability to meet the most elemental defensive needs of the Habsburg Monarchy”

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<sup>91</sup> *Maria Theresa*.

<sup>92</sup> Alfred Ritter von Arneth, *Geschichte Maria Theresa's* (Vienna, 1863), 181.

<sup>93</sup> Bassett, *For God and Kaiser*, 95.

<sup>94</sup> Hochedlinger, “Rekrutierung - Militarisierung,” 338.

inspired changes necessary to create and support a peacetime military establishment of 108,000 men.<sup>95</sup> Hochedlinger reminds us that this discrepancy between Prussia and Austria was not due to the *Monarchia Austriaca's* lack of resolve as a “peaceful colossus” but rather to its inability to exploit the vast resources of its realm.<sup>96</sup>

The state and administration reform of 1748-1749 entailed the financial stabilization of the Habsburg war machine through a richly delayed stratification of tax-and-military levies. The Estates were placed under the “sovereignty and governance” of their own rulers, and contribution payments were regularized. Haugwitz was keen to abolish the older, fragmented territorial administrations, an effort that led to the creation of the *Directorium in publicis et cameralibus* in 1749. This was a central administrative super-ministry that combined public affairs and fiscal affairs into a single administrative authority overseeing taxation and revenue, military finance, and state reform across the Austrian and Bohemian lands.<sup>97</sup> Hochedlinger identifies a transition from an estate-dominated provincial administration to a princely administrative apparatus. This trend held only for territories close to Austria, as Hungary, Lombardy, and the Austrian Netherlands were outside the state reform.<sup>98</sup> These military reforms were integral in pushing Austria toward a modern centralized system, which is defined by the sovereign’s monopoly over the organized deployment of force.<sup>99</sup>

The Empress’ military reforms also served to redefine the spirit and masculinity of her soldiers. Maria Theresa’s Political Testament (1749-50) reflects on the losses of Silesia and confirms her commitment to “promoting the best welfare” of her soldiers and lands. Her gendered role as *Mater Castrorum* allowed her to accentuate this commitment. The Empress placed the love for her soldiers and subjects above her devotion to her children: “And dearly as I love my family and children, so that I spare no effort, trouble, care, or labor for their sakes, yet I would always have put

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<sup>95</sup> Szabo, *The Seven*, 24.

<sup>96</sup> Hochedlinger, “Preußen in Weiß,” 63.

<sup>97</sup> Hochedlinger, “Rekrutierung - Militarisierung,” 345.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 402.

the general welfare of my dominions above them [...] seeing that I am the general and first mother of the said dominions.”<sup>100</sup> The general and mother treated her soldiers as her children, and placed equal attention to the development of their rational faculties.<sup>101</sup> Indeed, the Empress sought to increase both the quantity and quality of the officer corps, and endeavored to make her soldiers court-worthy personalities, as opposed to mindless machines.<sup>102</sup>

Her emphasis on preserving and enhancing the dignity of her soldiers can be read as a deliberate effort to reshape masculinity. Soldiers were to serve out of duty, not submission. Maria Theresa was vehemently opposed to Prussian-style conscription, which she regarded as little more than a form of slavery maintained through violence.<sup>103</sup> She adopted an approach in line with that of her father, who recommended appealing to the soldiers’ reason, and their desire for social uplift through “special privileges, marks of honor, and the like.”<sup>104</sup> As a result, Austria’s primary means of raising troops was through recruitment and voluntary enlistment both in its own lands and abroad.<sup>105</sup> This system was not without its faults, and produced an unprecedented increase in desertion rates which was countered by a flood of ordinances in the 1750s. The Empress was forced to depart from her reformist tendencies at the start of the Seven Years’ War, when her government reintroduced traditional land recruitment (*Landesrekrutierung*) to address military quotas. These recruitment efforts did much to reverse the emphasis placed on soldier dignity: recruits were fettered with iron; small towns raised sums to “purchase volunteers” among their own sons; and Estates would auction Prussian war prisoners to supplement the standing army.<sup>106</sup> While the Empress’ nascent modern

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<sup>100</sup> Maria Theresa, *Politisches Testament*, KFA 212-1.

<sup>101</sup> Kaunitz’s attitude towards soldiers followed suit. The Chancellor’s letters to Mr. le Marechal demonstrate his concern toward the human treatment of soldiers. Kaunitz appealed to the “good heart” of the Marechal and asked him to consider the petition of a soldier, reminding him it was improper to be “hard and inhumane” towards soldiers. Chancellor Kaunitz, “Letter to Mr. le Maréchal,” May 1777, Hungarian National Archives, P 307, III.-22.

<sup>102</sup> Szabo, *The Seven*, 26.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-27.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Hochedlinger, “Rekrutierung - Militarisierung,” 348.

military apparatus was not yet resilient by the 1750s, this does not take away from her ability to reshape soldier identity. Her reformist intentions were once more put in practice after the war, as Austria recognized that great potential for modernization lay in the growth or extraction of the military from its proper sphere and its transformation into a vessel for social mobility.<sup>107</sup> The Empress' reformist spirit distinguished her from Frederick's "misanthropic militarism," and although scholars link Austria's reforms to "Prussification," this process was functional as opposed to spiritual, as the Empress combined Prussian efficiency with Austrian humanism. Her persona as *Mater Castrorum* was integral to this recasting: in distancing herself from forceful methods, the Empress cultivated an army whose loyalty and obedience was grounded in "moral conviction, Catholic paternalism, and esprit de corps."<sup>108</sup>

The rise of military academies and preparatory schools during the interwar years are an example of lasting reform, as it asserted the dignity and humanity of soldiers, and recast the military profession as a form of public service to the dynasty rather than merely a vehicle of aristocratic honor. While the academies constituted a novel mechanism for cultivating loyal officers, it was their tie to long-standing traditions of aristocratic prestige and service to the dynasty that made them appealing. As of 1749, the state began to sponsor the sons of the middle and lower-class impoverished nobility, as well as those of deserving senior officers. Such soldiers were granted access to military academies previously reserved for the nobility. The Empress' Viennese Theresianum Knight Academy and the Theresian Military Academy at Wiener Neustadt (founded in 1752) sought to provide a humanist education for her soldiers.<sup>109</sup> The academies sought to create "competent officers" who were "no longer tied to old aristocratic ideas of a noble occupation," instead following

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<sup>107</sup> Hochedlinger, "Preußen in Weiß," 67.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> The Theresian Military Academy was to provide for the military education of "one hundred poor young nobles, whose fathers had provided twenty years of loyal civilian service, and one hundred sons of deserving senior officers." Ibid.

a “new principle of enlightened performance.”<sup>110</sup> The training of “competent” and “upright” men required a combination of rigorous military drills and a humanistic education in letters, dance, and arithmetic.<sup>111</sup> The ethos of this education is encapsulated by an inscription in the inner courtyard of the Wiener Neustadt castle: “*armis et litteris*” (“by arms and by letters”).<sup>112</sup> As before, the Empress reforms had implications for masculinity: a competent man could combine reason with strength, and sought to serve the Empress with the sword and the pen.

The Empress’ motherly persona justified her educational reforms. Teodora Shek Brnardić posits the Empress’ creation of the Theresian Military Academy sprung from a *landesmütterliche* intention.<sup>113</sup> The term *landesmütterliche*, meaning “motherly in a sovereign way,” connected her personal commitment as a mother of sixteen children to her resolute nature as a reformer of the army. The Empress’ *landesmütterliche* intentions are not incompatible with Bassett’s *Mater Castrorum* persona, but they go further in illuminating the nurturing nature of her reforms. The confessional framework within which these changes took place would have ensured her “competent” soldiers were attuned to the maternal symbolism through which she represented her authority, allowing them to interpret her educational initiatives as benevolent reforms geared toward their personal development. The regular masses and songs of praise dedicated to the Empress and the Virgin Mary at the academies would have reinforced their understanding of this quasi-maternal bond.<sup>114</sup>

Crucially, the Empress’ educational reforms allowed non-noble soldiers to enter into her confessional framework. After 1769, the students of the Theresian Military Academy would have enjoyed the total abolition of social distinctions. These “anti-noble” and “anti-elitist” policies were reinforced by Count Anton Colloredo, the *Oberdirector* of the Academy, and came to fruition during

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<sup>110</sup> Allmayer-Beck, “Establishment of the Theresian Military Academy,” 119; Allmayer-Beck, “Wandlungen Im Heerwesen,” 19.

<sup>111</sup> Brnardić, “The Upbringing,” in *Croatian Institute*, 115.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 565; Brnardić, “The Upbringing,” in *Croatian Institute*, 120.

the reign of Joseph II.<sup>115</sup> Colloredo's *Reglements* clearly stated "neither birth, nor the outcomes of fate," nor similar fortuitous events, permitted an individual to consider himself to be superior to others "who do not possess such accidental advantages."<sup>116</sup>

The reforms also allowed soldiers from the hereditary lands to enter the Empress' confessional framework, and they extended the privilege of social mobility to non-Austrian subjects. The presence of Hungarian and Croatian students in the Empress' military academies strengthened horizontal ties of loyalty in the military sphere. If non-Habsburg subjects could assume the title and social benefits of the soldier class, this would create cohesion among the Empress' army. Olga Khavanova notes that following these reforms, Habsburg society was viewed by those outside the empire as "horizontally mobile:" opportunities and social mobility could be enjoyed across the Austrian and hereditary lands. The Empress' beloved Hungarians were the primary foreign recipients of these benefits. In 1751, Maria Theresa ascribed the incomes of the wealthy southern-Hungarian abbey of St. Archangel Michael in Bátaszék to the Theresian College and ordered the nobles of the Austrian Monarchy to provide ten scholarships, of which at least half should come from the Kingdom of Hungary.<sup>117</sup> The result was a rise in Hungarian officers, especially those from non-noble origins. Between 1693 and 1815, about forty-three percent of Hungarian colonels in the Habsburg army came from petty or landless nobility, and every fifth Hungarian general was of non-noble origin.<sup>118</sup> Admission to these institutions extended the Empress' maternal oversight to the hereditary lands: an entry from the Theresian Military Academy's logbook of the 1780s describes Csollich (a Hussar) as a "special protégé of the Empress Maria Theresa."<sup>119</sup> The social ascent of non-nobles was further strengthened by international patronage. Two letters addressed to Count Ferenc Nádasdy, written by Imre Bárdossy, a nobleman from the

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<sup>115</sup> Brnardić, "The Upbringing," in *Croatian Institute*, 116.

<sup>116</sup> Colloredo, *Reglement für die kaiserl. königl. theresianische Militärakademie*, 61–62.

<sup>117</sup> Khavanova, "Fascination with," 115.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>119</sup> Svoboda, *Die Theresianische*, 3:1.

Vas-Eisenburg County, describe how Bárdossy's elder son, József, received a royal scholarship to the Löwenburg noble college (he attended the college from 1756 to 1758) after an intercession by Hungarian Chancellor Count Lipót Nádasdy.<sup>120</sup> These patronage mechanisms brought soldiers in the hereditary lands closer to the crown's military apparatus, enabling vertical ties of loyalty between the Empress' Austrian officers and soldiers in the hereditary lands.<sup>121</sup>

The educational reforms would have enticed soldiers with their promise of social mobility. The comprehensive nature of the academies' education prepared soldiers for a successful bureaucratic career, granting them the opportunity to pivot away from the military.<sup>122</sup> The fact that the reforms deliberately granted soldiers this freedom is a testament to the reformist spirit of the Empress: although her intent was to mold the troops capable of reconquering her beloved Silesia, she put the development of her soldiers as rational subjects first. After finishing their education, it was possible for young men to spend four to ten years in Vienna to decide between the military and civil career, and foster closer personal connections within the Empress' court.<sup>123</sup> This "sponsored mobility," Khavanova claims, served as a primary motivator to join the Habsburg academies across all principalities.<sup>124</sup> This mobility worked horizontally, since education served as a currency across Austrian, Hungarian, and Italian theaters. As an example, Chamber Council Podivin von Kutschersfeld fought in Austria during the War of Austrian Succession, was assigned to the Savoy Dragoon Regiment in Italy until 1752, and, after quitting the military, became the councilor in the Hungarian Zips Chamber Administration situated in Kaschau.<sup>125</sup> Von Kutscherfeld's career demonstrates social ascent could unfold across multiple Habsburg territories, thus increasing the appeal of an Austrian military education.

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<sup>120</sup> Khavanova, "Fascination with," 117.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

The inclusive spirit of the Empress' educational reforms ensured that foreigners and non-nobles could partake in her confessional framework. This novel mechanism for creating loyal soldiers was successful as it tied prospective soldiers to traditional mechanisms of aristocratic prestige and service to the crown. At the same time, academies catalyzed a shift toward state-managed pathways of mobility that reoriented social advancement away from traditional hereditary privilege and toward merit. The Empress was hence using established symbols of aristocratic honor as a gateway into institutions intended to reshape the very foundations of elite military identity and soldier masculinity, replacing inherited privilege with meritocratic, "competent" service to the crown.

The rise of social mobility was hastened by the creation of more inclusive military orders. The chivalric Order of the Golden Fleece (*Ordre de la Toison d'Or*) was perhaps the most prestigious of these orders. Founded in the fifteenth century, the Golden Fleece was a noble dynastic institution dedicated towards the defense of its faith.<sup>126</sup> The Empress herself was the Grand Mistress of the Order of the Starry Cross (*Sternkreuzorden*), the female counterpart to the Golden Fleece. Newspapers at the time included sections listing current affairs relating to the orders, so the general population would have known about these prestigious communities.<sup>127</sup> Common soldiers in the hereditary lands would have also been aware of their prestige: Hungarian coins honoring the foundation of the Order of Maria Theresa (1757) and her Order of Saint Stephen (1764) were in circulation throughout the mid-eighteenth-century.<sup>128</sup> Maria Theresa used the prestige of the orders to increase soldier loyalties to the crown. To further boost soldier morale in the aftermath of the Battle of Kolín, she founded the Military Order of Maria Theresa on June 22, 1757.<sup>129</sup> This order no longer had the character of a blue-blooded community of prayer as it was open to all officers who

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<sup>126</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 392.

<sup>127</sup> One example is the *Wienerisches Diarium* (Vienna), May 21, 1757.

<sup>128</sup> *The Foundation of the Order of Maria Theresa; The Foundation of the Order of St. Stephen*

<sup>129</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 392.

had distinguished themselves in battle. As with the Empress' military academies, the new order "stood for social openness and an ethos of achievement."<sup>130</sup>

The Empress' dual status as *rex femineus* allowed her to create and legitimize these orders. The masculine recognition as the King of Hungary meant she had inherited the "*qualitatem masculinam per fictionem juris virtute pragmaticae sanctionis*" necessary to create new orders ([She possessed] the masculine quality, by legal fiction, by virtue of the Pragmatic Sanction).<sup>131</sup> At the same time, it is likely the Empress sought to reclaim her militarist persona of *Mater Castrorum* by appropriating these virile networks. The Empress' power was often checked by Emperor Francis I, who often overturned her rulings and appointments to the orders, "jealously protecting one of his few prerogatives in the hereditary lands."<sup>132</sup> The Empress' militarist persona was further undermined by Joseph II, who was granted the main responsibility over military affairs after 1765. The Empress' struggles with the orders reveals the limit of her *Mater Castrorum* persona. As Hochedlinger notes, the title was honorable in times of peace, but futile in times of war, when soldiers needed a *roi-connétable* (king constable) like Frederick the Great to lead troops into the field. Frederick's militarist persona was neither compromised by a spouse nor by his gender: his leadership of the army and jurisdiction over Prussian military orders was unquestioned. The Empress was further weakened by the notion of *clementia austriaca*, which described Austrian patience and clemency in the face of adversity.<sup>133</sup> It should therefore come as no surprise that the Empress created her first military order less than a week after Austria's decisive victory at Kolín.<sup>134</sup> The victory achieved the psychologically important proof that the "roi-connétable" on horseback would not be met with clemency and mild reproach. The creation and expansion of the orders was hence a crucial vessel through which the Empress repaired and maintained the militaristic facet of her persona.

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 393.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 394.

<sup>132</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 329.

<sup>133</sup> Hochedlinger, "Preußen in Weiß," 91.

<sup>134</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 392.

As with the academies, the novel mechanism of inclusive orders was made appealing by its traditional, dynastic components. The formalities of noble and non-noble orders were modeled down to the smallest details; the new orders possessed heraldic symbols, a coat of arms, titles, and ceremonies. Nobles were added to some orders to make them even more desirable.<sup>135</sup> This structure strengthened vertical ties of loyalty between the Empress' court, her noble officers, and her non-noble soldiers.

The eagerness of nobles in the non-hereditary lands to be associated with the Empress' military orders suggests these mechanisms of loyalty were effective in fostering enthusiasm for the Empress' cause. In his official portrait in Gödöllő Palace, Hungarian Count Antal Grassalkovich wears the collar of the Order of St. Stephen.<sup>136</sup> Officials could be seen wearing the badges and stars of their orders, many of which were gifts from the Empress (Figure 6). Maria Theresa herself wore a richly decorated cross of the Order of St. Stephen (Figure 7). These decorated emblems turned loyalty and prestige into a visual performance; the jewels were a resplendent public display of service to the Empress.

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<sup>135</sup> In 1765, for example, four high-ranking noble knights of the Order of the Fleece, including Kaunitz, were added to the Order of St. Stephen. *Ibid.*, 396.

<sup>136</sup> Portrait of Count Antal Grassalkovich.



Figure 6. *Badge of the Order of the Golden Fleece and Star of the Order of Saint Stephen. Eighteenth century. Hungarian National Museum, Budapest.*<sup>137</sup>



Figure 7. *Gem-decorated Cross of the Order of Saint Stephen, Worn by Its Grand Founder, Maria Theresa. 1764. Hungarian National Museum, Budapest.*<sup>138</sup>

<sup>137</sup> (1) *Badge.*

<sup>138</sup> *The Gem-Decorated.*

Although the new military orders were not entirely successful in granting social mobility to the soldiers and officer corps, they are a testament to the reformist spirit of the Empress. The rise of the orders increased the entry of Slavic-born officers in the light troops of the military frontier, but they were not enough to satisfy the economically poorly situated families of birth nobles, who still relied on earlier systems of regimental proprietorship (*Kompaniewirtschaft*) that enabled colonels and company commanders to earn income by managing supplies and recruitment.<sup>139</sup> Still, the resolve with which the Empress fought for these inclusive policies reveals her desire to enable “deserving bourgeois officials to scale the social ladder.”<sup>140</sup> The decree stating bourgeois officers could apply for elevation into the nobility after thirty years of service and the automatic conferral of knighthood upon non-noble recipients granted by the Order of Maria Theresa led to rife tensions between the Empress and Khevenhüller, who advocated against the opening of the court to non-nobles for fear of angering the nobility.<sup>141</sup> The fact that the Empress was prepared to compromise the interests of her nobles, crucial in sustaining a fragile wartime apparatus, is a testament to her reformist spirit in the military realm.

The Empress balanced her concessions to non-noble fighters with significant personal engagements and inducements to the noble officer corps. The championing of such figures ensured the image of *Mater Castrorum* circulated beyond Vienna, and it served to strengthen vertical ties of loyalty between the Empress and her officers. The Empress’ ability to forge strong ties through consistent personal engagement, lively correspondence, and the giving of gifts was especially important to foster morale in the event of unsuccessful campaigns, which could inspire defection to the enemy.

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<sup>139</sup> Hochedlinger, “Preußen in Weiß,” 82-3.

<sup>140</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 394.

<sup>141</sup> Brnardić, “The Upbringing,” in *Croatian Institute*, 110; Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 398.

At the start of the interwar years, the Empress sought to restore the appeal of the military profession through inducements to disabled officers and widows.<sup>142</sup> At the onset of the Seven Years' War, the Empress invigorated these efforts by issuing "princely patents" in the hereditary lands to the counties in which the nobility was unwilling to serve.<sup>143</sup> These patents demanded that nobles serve in the army, and would shame reluctant officers such as the once-leading Italians.<sup>144</sup> The issuing of princely patents was accompanied by a rollout of imperial patents of nobility (*Nobilitierungsurkunde*) to confirm participation in the noble class. These grand documents bestowed valor on nobles: the red wax seal and the Latin closing formula, "*Ad mandatum Sacrae Caesareae Majestatis proprium*," confirm such documents were issued by the official imperial chancery.<sup>145</sup> Patents were also issued to nobles in the hereditary lands: Count András Hadik de Futak, the celebrated hussar commander responsible for the success of the 1757 raid on Berlin, received one in early 1758 (Figure 8). The timing of the patent's issuing was close enough to Hadik's celebrated raid on Berlin to acknowledge his achievement, yet late enough to serve as a powerful incentive for his continued distinguished service. Patents of nobility were also compiled into elaborate books, such as the one presented to the Andrassy family in the 1750s.<sup>146</sup> This was notable, as the imperial chancery had raised the diplomatic and military importance of allied nobles to a ceremonial art form. These inducements had proven successful by the mid-1750s, when it was said that "every subject is already bound to consecrate himself to the service of the most high land princess."<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Hochedlinger, "Preußen in Weiß," 82.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> András Hadik, "Mária Terézia-rend nagykeresztése," 1758, Hungarian National Archives, P 307, I.-26.

<sup>146</sup> "Mária Terézia királyné Csatári Nagy...", 3 March 1749, P 507-1, D-8.

<sup>147</sup> Hochedlinger, "Rekrutierung - Militarisierung," 328.

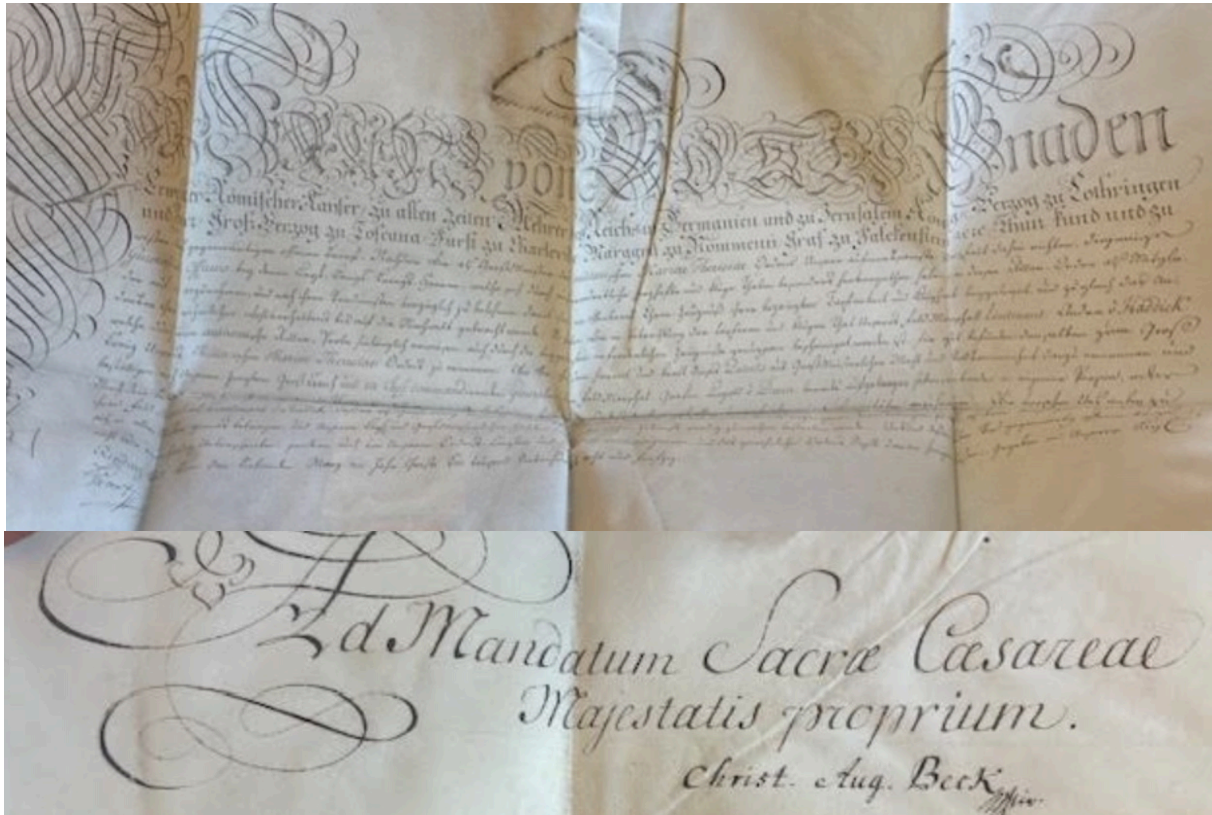


Figure 8. Patent of Nobility for Hadik I. András, Recipient of the Grand Cross of the Order of Maria Theresa. 1758. Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár (Hungarian National Archives).<sup>148</sup>

Those who portray the Empress as detached from her soldiers and officers overlook the integral role of correspondence, particularly with officers in the distant hereditary lands.<sup>149</sup> Maria Theresa’s 1762 letter to Kaunitz reveals the Empress’ conversations with her soldiers were far from superficial and performative. She describes how General Mahoni, a non-noble, had made assertive recommendations for the handling of wartime affairs, and had proposed a marriage between Leopold, the Empress’ son, and the Infanta Luisa<sup>150</sup> Leopold II did marry Maria Luisa of Spain, and the fact the officer felt at ease to initiate such a conversation is a testament to the Empress’ sincere effort to expand her discourse with non-nobles. Maria Theresa also sought to promote the

<sup>148</sup> Patent of nobility.

<sup>149</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, “Maria Theresa and the Love of Her Subjects,” 11–12. Stollberg-Rilinger claims the topos of the Empress’ accessibility to her soldiers is a myth.

<sup>150</sup> Maria Theresa, *Briefe der Kaiserin Maria Theresa*, 251, 259.

individual decision-making and creativity of her officers, and offered to them all that was at her disposal. In August 1756, a note by the Empress to Field Marshal Maximilian Ulysses von Browne asserted he was “given a free hand to undertake whatever military responses he saw fit.”<sup>151</sup> The Empress’ confidence in her commanders enabled her to forge indirect vertical ties with her soldiers. Horace St. Paul’s account of the Seven Years’ War reveals the soldier was acutely aware that any losses incurred by Browne’s men would be scathing to the Empress.<sup>152</sup> The Empress’ displays of generosity also allowed for more direct manifestations of vertical loyalty with the common soldier: in 1756, she made her own steed available to the military, a royal example that was “followed with such eagerness by noble and commoners alike that transport was effected with unexpected speed.”<sup>153</sup> Forging strong connections with her officers had the double effect of enabling their strategic success and connecting this success with the Empress’ image.

The Empress also fostered ties with her officers through the giving of gifts. At the outset of the War of Austrian Succession, she sent her finest horse, a costly jewelled sword, a diamond ring, and a letter to Palatine Pálffy of Hungary:

MY FATHER PÁLFFY,—I send you this horse, which is worthy of being mounted only by the noblest of my subjects; accept also this sword to defend me against my enemies, and keep this ring as a token of my lasting affection.<sup>154</sup>

Creating quasi-maternal ties of “affection” with distant subjects would have been essential in sustaining the surge of devotion that had sprung out of Hungary in 1741. Count Antal Grassalkovich, one of the nobles responsible for arranging the “our life and blood” coronation

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<sup>151</sup> Szabo, *The Seven*, 41.

<sup>152</sup> St. Paul, *Lobositz to Leuthen*, 102.

<sup>153</sup> Szabo, *The Seven*, 42.

<sup>154</sup> von Horn, *Maria Theresa*, 61.

ceremony, was treated with similar generosity.<sup>155</sup> Maria Theresa's gifts to the Count included a precious China coffee set; considering the Empress' two China rooms in Schönbrunn palace are among the most elaborate and richly decorated, this was likely to have been interpreted as a generous gift.<sup>156</sup> The Count, in turn, displayed overt, lasting loyalty to the Empress through the creation of a new coat of arms bearing her initials, "MT" (Figure 9). This exchange suggests gift-giving constituted a reciprocal language of obligation; dutiful backing by the Empress was rewarded with demonstrative acts of fidelity from nobles across the realm.

The Empress' military reforms allowed soldiers across her lands to enter into a confessional framework of reform, and redefined the norms of military masculinity itself. Through the creation of meritocratic orders of honor, the elevation of service to the sovereign as a pathway to ennoblement, and the inclusion of non-nobles in military academies, the Empress promoted an ideal of manhood grounded less in inherited rank than in demonstrable loyalty and performance. Her advancement of non-nobles was counterbalanced by generous gifts and inducements to the officer corps, which served to secure their loyalty and fasten their victories to her name. Although the Empress' reforms reveal her concern with progress, it was only toward the very end of her reign that Reform Catholicism and enlightened ideals of "state-building" converged as complementary orientations; the Empress consolidated the first component, while the latter emerged more fully under her co-regent. The Empress may hence be credited with releasing a transformational dynamic that would be harnessed by Joseph II to shift the dynasty's course from aristocratic absolutism to enlightened absolutism.

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<sup>155</sup> *The Grassalkovich*, infographic.

<sup>156</sup> *Coffee Set*.



Figure 9. *Grassalkovich Coat of Arms*. Gilded bronze, post-1784. Gödöllő Palace Museum.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> *Grassalkovich Coat*.

## CHAPTER THREE

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### *Rex Feminus: Ancien Régimes of Gender*

The Empress' reforms fostered devotion among those fortunate enough to be included in them, and her religious persona provided a confessional framework through which soldiers from across the empire could come into contact with their otherwise distant Empress. The Empress' ability to represent herself as both a masculine and feminine presence enabled her to continue securing ties of loyalty with her troops. The Enlightenment placed pressure on monarchical women to defend their actions in the public sphere and "account for their usefulness to society."<sup>158</sup> The Empress' championing of the feminine aspects of *rex femineus*, which may be split into the roles of mother and wife, may therefore be read as an attempt to portray the activities of the private sphere as being crucial to the success of the public sphere. Leveraging these qualities granted the Empress an advantage compared to her male counterparts. Still, the power of the *rex femineus* lay in her ability to combine these feminine portrayals with militant displays of chivalry and soldierliness. The writings of Joseph II and Voltaire show these qualities were distinctly masculine, as the "frailty," "frivolity," and "meddling" nature of women were a natural obstacle to their participation in "business" and the military.<sup>159</sup> These qualities would have been interpreted by the public as masculine markers, hence granting the Empress access to a plane of competition occupied by her male counterparts.

Historians studying female monarchs often conceptualize their person as uniquely feminine. They make two kinds of arguments. The first suggests female monarchs maintained political legitimacy by rhetorically and symbolically inhabiting a fundamentally masculine conception of sovereignty. For these scholars, including Carole Levin and Louis Montrose, kingship remains a

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<sup>158</sup> Yonan, *Empress Maria*, 5.

<sup>159</sup> Voltaire, *Voltaire's Philosophical*, 102; Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 545-6.

structurally masculine office, and female monarchs could sustain legitimacy by rhetorically aligning themselves with the masculine norms embedded in sovereign office.<sup>160</sup> The second argument posits female monarchy did not simply replicate male kingship but instead generated a newly reconfigured female seat that championed the monarch's distinctly feminine capacities. Dror Wahrman describes how by the end of the eighteenth century, the power of "Queen Bees" (female monarchs) was derived increasingly from their ability to bear children and foster quasi-motherly ties with their subjects.<sup>161</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger argues along similar lines, claiming the power of the Empress lay in upending the expected social relations between men and women in marriage and family.<sup>162</sup> Both arguments, however, presuppose that female monarchy constitutes a structural tension requiring resolution: either through symbolic substitution into a masculine office, or through the ceremonial reconfiguration and recasting of that office. This assumption is not consistent with eighteenth-century conceptions of gender. To transcend this structural tension, it is necessary to take into account that gender was a more fluid concept during the Empress' time. Dror Wahrman's work on the "ancien régime" of identity reveals gender in the eighteenth century was performed and assumed. Gender was not an "axiomatic presupposition of a deep inner core of selfhood," but rather an external social quality informed by a fluid self.<sup>163</sup> Wahrman makes clear that it is the Empress' *embodied* performance that matters. We can study this performance through an artistic and numismatic analysis. In our context, *rex femineus* denotes a composite mode of sovereignty in which kingly office and female embodiment were not mutually exclusive categories but coextensive political realities.

The historical usage of the term *rex femineus* makes it a particularly apt vehicle for Wahrman's conception of ancien régime gender as fluid and performative. Benedek M. Varga has already begun

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<sup>160</sup> Levin, *The Heart*; Montrose, "The Elizabethan."

<sup>161</sup> Wahrman, *The Making*, 5.

<sup>162</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 83.

<sup>163</sup> Wahrman, *The Making*, 198.

to situate the term *rex femineus* within an eighteenth-century Hungarian landscape, albeit only in the spirit of the first argument. Varga explains the tradition of *rex femineus* in Hungary dates back to Mary I (1371-1395), and was recomposed in honor of Empress Maria Theresa to legitimize the presence of a woman in an office reserved for men.<sup>164</sup> Tracing the title through the work of Charles Beem, Therese Martin, and Coral Lumbley, who reference the term's use with regards to twelfth-century monarchs, allows us to restore the term's fluid qualities, so that it can be applied to Wahrman's eighteenth century landscape. Coined by Beem in *The Lioness Roared*, the term *rex femineus* was applied to medieval monarchs to describe not only a "reigning queen" but a "female king."<sup>165</sup> Medieval historians posit the *rex femineus* participated in a gender-bending process, which drew upon contemporary notions of manhood and womanhood embodied in distinct gendered roles of kingship and queenship.<sup>166</sup> Although scholars suggest the twelfth century was the last moment when the model of a queen as king was possible, the Empress' royal representations suggest she is also worthy of the title. Indeed, the Empress' ability to embrace this dual nature meant she had more in common with Urraca of Castile-León (c.1079-1126), Matilda of England (1102-1167), and Melisende of Jerusalem (1105-1161), than Elisabeth and Catherine II, who were more likely to subordinate femininity to a masculine model of sovereignty.<sup>167</sup> Throughout her reign, the Empress calibrated these displays of filial, conjugal, and maternal duty and combined them with masculine portrayals to produce the dual image of *rex femineus*.

The feminine component of *rex femineus* entails, to some extent, notions of the Empress' physical beauty. Citing a German pamphlet from 1745, titled "Why Is the Queen of Hungary [Maria Theresa] So Extraordinarily Loved?", Stollberg-Rilinger posits the Empress' ability to win over her soldiers can largely be attributed to her physical beauty. The anonymous author of the pamphlet

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<sup>164</sup> Varga, "Making Maria," 236.

<sup>165</sup> Beem, *The Lioness*, 4.

<sup>166</sup> Lumbley, "Imperatrix, Domina," 72.

<sup>167</sup> Martin, *The Medieval*, 194.

writes: “Kings can preserve everything... A woman has the advantage over a man that her deeds make a greater impression in the mind. There is a more tender inclination against the beautiful sex.” Citing the English Ambassador to Austria’s statement from 1753, Stollberg-Rilinger claims Maria Theresa played to this strength: “Her person was made to wear a crown and her mind to give luster to it. Her countenance is filled with sense, spirit, and sweetness, and all her motions accompanied with grace and dignity.”<sup>168</sup> Notably, beauty does not seem to be confined to physical aspects. Indeed, the most striking elements of these quotes are their appeals to the Empress’ majesty and gravitas, not her “sweetness.” It was the former qualities that inspired dynastic loyalty.

Portraits of the Empress evince her majesty and gravitas more clearly, and can be understood as opportunities for the transubstantiation of the *rex femineus*’ image. Hungarian depictions of the Empress do emphasize her beautiful looks, and it is possible that soldiers visiting Gödöllő Palace would have been inspired to fight for a beautiful, rosy-cheeked queen (Figure 10). While one may be dazzled by her golden regalia, what is perhaps more appealing is the fact that it hails from multiple lands under the Empress’ governance. Proof of successful dynastic expansion was a crucial component of fostering soldier enthusiasm. The distinction between eastern and western European cultures were being formed during the Enlightenment, as western *philosophes* characterized western Europe as fundamentally different from its poorer, warlike eastern counterpart.<sup>169</sup> Yonan posits the Habsburg court’s “easterness” lent it a special role in defining Europe’s limits.<sup>170</sup> Portraits displaying dynastic expansion allowed the Empress to reassure her subjects they were already part of a frontier-defining European empire. This would have served as a self-fulfilling mechanism in times of war, when territories such as Silesia were being challenged: an Empress that could define Europe’s limits would surely be capable of defending her domestic lands.

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<sup>168</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, “Maria Theresa and the Love of Her Subjects,” 24.

<sup>169</sup> Yonan, *Empress Maria*, 136.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

In her portrait at Gödöllő, the Empress wears an elaborate blue gown and is surrounded by Hungarian, Czech, and Austrian regalia (Figure 10). The three crowns beside her can be interpreted, using Kantorowicz's language, as "mutual borrowings and exchanges of insignia." Indeed, each crown was a political instrument awarded by a Catholic institution that symbolized a mutual borrowing of both political and religious structures for the purposes of the Habsburgs.<sup>171</sup> Following Kantorowicz, the spiritual and secular nature of this portrait encapsulated more than the *corpus mysticum* of the Empress; it represented her *corpus verum*, a vessel through which her soldiers could connect with the leader of their army. In the same way the Eucharist offered at mass presents an opportunity for renewal, a portrait of the Empress would have provided the opportunity for her soldiers to connect with her, and access the opportunity for a kind of "rebirth."<sup>172</sup> The portrait is hung in a darkened room near the reception hall of Gödöllő Palace, and its embellished corners grant it a shrine-like appearance. The viewing of these portraits would have hence served as personal spiritual encounters with the Empress, allowing soldiers to share in her beauty and find solace in the dynastic expansion of the Habsburgs.

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<sup>171</sup> Kantorowicz, *The King's*, 193.

<sup>172</sup> Marin, *Portrait of the King*, 6.



Figure 10. *Maria Theresa with Hungarian, Czech, and Austrian Regalia*. ca. 1746. Follower or workshop of Martin van Meytens.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> *Maria Theresa with Hungarian*.

The Empress' portrayals as a mother went further than her image as a beauty in informing the *rex femineus* identity. The Empress needed to bridge the perceived gap between "her duty as a monarchical figure and her activities as a [...] mother."<sup>174</sup> For Maria Theresa, the role of mother entailed a frustrating tautology: motherhood was a way of emerging from the private sphere, to which she was constrained because she wanted to be a mother. The Empress could escape this tautology through royal representations that enabled her to combine her motherhood with the role of protector. Through these portrayals, the Empress positioned herself as the guarantor of her soldiers' welfare, moral discipline and collective endurance.

The Empress' resolve to portray herself as the mother of the nation enabled her to infuse dynastic loyalty with the feeling of continuity. Voltaire's account of the 1741 coronation describes the Empress appearing before the Hungarian assembly "holding in her arms her eldest son, and [...] [saying] I deliver into your hands the daughter and son of your kings, whose safety depends on your conduct."<sup>175</sup> The presence of young Joseph assured the lords their commitment would be honored and safeguarded by future Habsburg generations, dismantling any fear that their military contributions would go unrewarded. The Empress' vulnerability as a mother allowed her to deliver an even greater dynastic responsibility upon her subjects, whose conduct would determine the "safety" of future generations.<sup>176</sup> Joseph's participation in the ceremony encoded dynastic loyalty with a sense of continuity, as the Hungarian alliance could be viewed as a reciprocal obligation of protection that would hold at least until the end of Joseph's reign.

Maria Theresa's portrayals of fecundity served to further strengthen her subjects' faith in dynastic continuity. Meyten's grand painting of the Habsburg-Lorraine family and their thirteen children is perhaps the best example of such a portrayal (Figure 11). While Francis I sits in front of a

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<sup>174</sup> Yonan, *Empress Maria*, 39.

<sup>175</sup> Voltaire, *The Age of Louis*, 60-61.

<sup>176</sup> Anderson, "Women, Power," 4.

classical façade that connects him to structure and architectural grandeur, the Empress sits below a vase, linking her to a classical precedent that invoked femininity and motherhood. Yonan argues the public would have been able to interpret this painting as a sign of the Empress' fecundity, as they could read the vase as a signifier of the female body.<sup>177</sup> The feminine quality of fecundity is portrayed alongside a masculine network of empowerment. The Empress is surrounded by her male heirs, Joseph, Karl, and young Leopold. Francis I, surrounded by his daughters, Maria Cristina and Maria Anna, joins his sons in pointing to Maria Theresa. The convergence of feminine fecundity and masculine lineage encapsulates the authority of the rex femineus; feminine reproductive capacity could underwrite and legitimize a fundamentally patriarchal structure of power.

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<sup>177</sup> Yonan, *Empress Maria*, 39.



Figure 11. *Portrait of Maria Theresa of Habsburg, Francis I, Holy Roman Emperor, and Their Thirteen Children*. Oil on canvas by Martin van Meytens, 1756. Palazzo Pitti, Florence.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> van Meytens, *Portrait of Maria*.

The Empress' children allowed her to enrich the impression of dynastic expansion, and enabled her soldiers to identify with multiple royal representations. Her children's illustrious marriages, including that of Maria Antoinette to King Louis XVI of France, were the tethers of Habsburg expansion. These cross-cultural marriages reflected the multi-faceted identity of Habsburg subjects, and allowed them to select their personal icons of devotion. The private collection of the Croatian Hillebrand von Prandau and Normann-Ehrenfels family suggests Habsburg subjects had loyalties to the non-German branches of the Habsburg family. The collections contain three miniatures in ivory depicting members of the House of Bourbon, whose members, including Louis XVI, had married Habsburg royals.<sup>179</sup> The families themselves demonstrated how marriage could inspire horizontal networks of loyalty across Habsburg lands. The Hillebrand von Prandau and Normann-Ehrenfels family were among dozens of noble families originating from Italy, Germany, and Austria, who had relocated in the area between the Danube, Drava, and Sava Rivers following the withdrawal of the Ottomans in the first decades of the eighteenth century. Such nobles, including members of the Odescalchi, Janković, and Adamović families, formed the bedrock of eastern Habsburg power, and cultivated their devotion through artistic collections of various members of the Habsburg family.<sup>180</sup> Such portraits never failed to include royal representations of the Empress; even the Odescalchi family's portrait of Francis I shows the red-white sash of the Order of Maria Theresa placed over his chest.<sup>181</sup> The Empress' representation as a mother allowed her to imbue dynastic loyalty with a sense of continuity, and her children enabled her to secure horizontal networks of loyalty. Her male counterparts did not possess such representational advantages.

The Empress' portrayals as the wife of Francis I demonstrates the interplay between the feminine and masculine components of *rex femineus*. A numismatic analysis reveals how the Empress

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<sup>179</sup> Sabljak, "Portraits of Habsburg," 154.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

was able to leverage her role as the wife of Francis I to access what contemporaries would have considered to be masculine arenas.<sup>182</sup> Assessing royal representations depicted on coinage allows us to reconstruct the visual language to which common soldiers in Austria and the hereditary lands were frequently exposed.<sup>183</sup> Over one third of the medals produced during the Empress' lifetime were minted by foreign medal-makers, suggesting a wide distribution of this form of portrayal. During the Hungarian coronation in 1741, the Imperial and Royal Court Chamber alone distributed 16,500 small golden and silver tokens depicting the Empress' political claim.<sup>184</sup> Anna Fabiankowitsch posits these tokens became mass media, "comparable to the contemporary engraving or the broadsheet [...] to the organ of journalism."<sup>185</sup> The diffusion of these images make them examples of mobile royal representations, capable of expanding horizontal loyalty and sustaining the image of the Empress across all ranks of the army.

A commemorative medallion of Francis I and Maria Theresa (1760) reveals how the Empress' role as the wife of Francis nurtured and exalted her military persona (Figure 12). This royal representation was issued following Austria's losses at Liegnitz, and can be viewed as a confirmation of the Empress' military prowess in the face of her army's continued failure to recapture Silesia. The medallion portrays the royal couple (*das Kaiserpaar*) as strikingly similar: both have highly stylized, cascading curls topped with a headpiece; their side profiles match; and the width of their chest and upper body are identical. Markings near their eyes and chin reveal their age. The significance of these traits becomes clear when comparing the medallion to coinage from ancient Rome, which served as conduits for illuminating the social and political ties between rulers. Mark Antony, for example, issued coinage of Cleopatra and himself during his campaigns against Octavian in the 30s BCE (Figure 13). Paul Zanker suggests Mark Antony fashioned Cleopatra in his own image to associate

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<sup>182</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 545-6.

<sup>183</sup> Kaunitz was responsible for creating inscriptions such as *Germania Pacata* (Germany Pacified). Fabiankowitsch, "Striking Images," in *Die Medaillenproduktion*, 18.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

himself with her wealthy kingdom, and make her appear more threatening.<sup>186</sup> Similarly to the *Kaiserpaar's* depiction in the medallion, Cleopatra and Antony's hair and facial features are nearly identical, as is the width of their neck, which indicated military vigor. Coinage issued by Octavian during this time provides another point of comparison. Keen to liken himself to his adoptive father, Julius Caesar, Octavian issued a silver denarius bearing the inscription "*Divi Filius*" ("son of the divine one") (Figure 14). Like the *Kaiserpaar*, Caesar and Octavian face one another: Caesar wears a crown, and his neck and chin demonstrate his aged wisdom. Octavian, conscious of his young age and distant lineage to the deified Caesar, wished to portray himself as an older, more experienced son of Caesar in order to gain credibility during the war.<sup>187</sup> In both the ancient coin and the medallion, the military figure wears a laurel and is placed on the left, and the figure wishing to be likened to their militant counterpart faces them squarely. The Empress and her court would have been attuned to the symbolism of ancient Rome. Indeed, Yonan argues there was a deliberate attempt to include classical imagery in her royal representations, and Rilinger notes Francis I's tombstone depicted him as a Roman emperor.<sup>188</sup>

As the male figure of the pair, Francis I was figuratively granted the military and political rights to the kingdom, as well as the title of Holy Roman Emperor. Similarly to Octavian, Maria Theresa could have been transposing the militaristic qualities reserved for her husband's persona onto her own. She was also sharing in his title of Holy Roman Emperor, which her gender prohibited her from acquiring. She would capitalize on this association later in her reign, when she began to mint coins describing herself as "Empress of the Romans, Queen of Hungary and of Bohemia"<sup>189</sup> Joint portrayals with Francis I could allow the Empress to transcend the limits of her

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<sup>186</sup> Zanker, "Rival Images," 71.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>188</sup> Yonan, *Empress Maria*, 39; Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 513.

<sup>189</sup> Fabiankowitzsch, "Striking Images," in *Die Medaillenproduktion*, 10.

gender without forfeiting her feminine qualities. Indeed, she wore ornate hairpieces and jewelry not dissimilar to Cleopatra's.



Figure 12. *Das Kaiserpaar Franz I. Stephan und Maria Theresia*. Gold; onyx (white on blue-grey) by Louis Sireis, 1760. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.<sup>190</sup>



Figure 13. *Diademed, Draped Bust of Cleopatra (Obverse) and Bare Head of Antony (Reverse)*. 36 BC. British Museum.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Sireis, *Das Kaiserpaar*.

<sup>191</sup> *Diademed, draped bust*.



Figure 14. *Silver Denarius with Portrait of the Caesar Divi Filius (Octavian) Opposite That of the Divus Iulius (Julius Caesar)*. 38 BC (RRC 532/4).<sup>192</sup>

In the same way Mark Anthony's representation allowed him to share in the power of Cleopatra, the Emperor's aesthetic similarities to Maria Theresa in the medallion may be read as signs of dependence and devotion towards the *rex femineus*. Royal portraiture featuring the Empress' coinage provides further evidence for this dynamic. In one of the few individual portraits of the Emperor on the walls of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, he points to a coin featuring his wife (Figure 15). The Emperor is surrounded by technological and scientific instruments that are a testament to his enlightened, reformist spirit as a financier and entrepreneur.<sup>193</sup> The Emperor is hesitant, however, to assert an autonomous imperial mark on his enlightened nature: he points to a golden coin of his wife, suggesting it was the legitimacy of her dynasty and its economic strength that created the conditions for enlightened reform. In Kantorowiczian terms, Francis I is invoking the *corpus mysticum* of the Empress embodied in her coinage to connect her with enlightened ideals. This is significant given her hesitancy to embrace enlightened reform after the 1770s.<sup>194</sup> Royal representations alongside the Emperor allowed the Empress' persona to benefit from the glow of

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<sup>192</sup> *Portrait of the Caesar Divi Filius*.

<sup>193</sup> Neuhauser, *Maria Theresa*, 131.

<sup>194</sup> Sorkin, "Vienna-Linz: Joseph," 227.

enlightenment despite her personal reservations. This has implications for the masculinity of the Emperor: his evident dependence transforms him into a conduit of the Empress' power rather than its source. In practicing mutual borrowing of their respective military power and dynastic legitimacy, the Empress and her husband were able to associate her image with masculine qualities of dominance and militarism. The *rex femineus* emerges from this reciprocal exchange, as the feminine *corpus mysticum* could merge with distinctly masculine qualities.



Figure 15. *Herzog Franz Stephan I. von Lothringen (1708–1765), in ganzer Figur in seinen naturhistorischen Sammlungen*. Oil on canvas by Johann Zoffany, 1776–1777. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Zoffany, *Franz Stephan I.*

The *rex femineus*' distinctly masculine representations as a warrior and general enabled her to compete with the image of her male counterparts. Wahrman's ancien régime of identity draws on the idea of masquerades to explain how the Empress' depictions as a masculine warrior were convincing to the eighteenth-century soldier. The masquerade allowed its members to divest themselves from their "borrowed feathers" and assume the character which suited them best.<sup>196</sup> Vienna was no stranger to these thrilling performances of collective play. In a diary entry for 1743, Prince Khevenhüller-Metsch describes how Maria Theresa and Francis Stephen came "frequently to the Ballhaus in order to see their masquerades and were never so content as when they disguised themselves so that they were unrecognised."<sup>197</sup> While the masquerade was an untrammelled *collective* play of identity and metamorphosis between its invitees, our Empress played this game with subjects from across her realm.<sup>198</sup> The performative ensemble was chosen by the Empress according to the purpose of the specific representation.

When it came to winning over the Hungarians, the Empress chose to be depicted on horseback, carrying a sword (Figure 1). The traditional coronation ride (*Krönungsritt*), which entailed performing sword thrusts on horseback upon coronation hill, was also depicted on coinage distributed to the public.<sup>199</sup> The Empress demonstrated more masculinity than her male subjects on that day: "while they were protecting their readiness to lay down their lives in her defense, she was the only person who refrained from tears."<sup>200</sup> The absence of sentimentality would have been viewed by contemporaries as a masculine marker. Voltaire claimed that for women, "tears [were] more easily excited by sorrow than in grown men."<sup>201</sup> He credits this absence of sentimentality with securing the

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<sup>196</sup> Wahrman, *The Making*, 198.

<sup>197</sup> Freihs, "Viennese Masquerades," *The World of the Habsburgs*.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> Fabiankowitzsch, "Striking Images," in *Die Medaillenproduktion*, 12.

<sup>200</sup> Voltaire, *The Age of Louis*, 1:63.

<sup>201</sup> Voltaire, *Voltaire's Philosophical*, 300.

future of Habsburg alliances: “the excited zeal of her Hungarians re-animated England and Holland, [...] she exerted all her influence in the empire, and carried on a negotiation with the king of Sardinia, whose provinces furnished her with soldiers.”<sup>202</sup>

Although displays of restraint may have enabled the Empress to secure the trust of her soldiers, these distinctly masculine portrayals point to an intrinsic weakness in the persona of *rex femineus*. As Voltaire’s account reveals, the Empress’ embodied performance of masculinity needed to be excellent given she was to be the leader of her men. The Empress’ courtiers marveled at her exceptional performances, from her speed as a horserider to her ability to go without sleep as she challenged her courtiers to games at all hours of the evening.<sup>203</sup> This excellence came at a price. From the 1750s onwards, the Empress began claiming she was “ill of body and mind,” likening herself to a “beast.”<sup>204</sup> Though these bouts of sadness may have been tied to postpartum depression, the tragedies of war, or knowledge of Francis Stephen’s love affairs, they point to a structural weakness in the *rex femineus* persona. While this framework allowed the Empress to benefit from the advantages of both genders, it required double the effort to keep up appearances. The Empress’ hesitancy with regards to enlightened reform towards the end of her reign could be explained by this challenge, as her “illness” prompted her to carry out her public duties “mechanically and not in a manner fuelled by reason, because [she had] completely lost it.”<sup>205</sup> The Empress’ loss of reason prompted her recourse to traditionalism at the end of her reign, implying the constraints of the *rex femineus* persona could be responsible for the dampening of the Empress’ reformist energies.

While performing kingship through her own body came at a cost, there are representations that offer a masculine vision of the Empress without reliance on physical masculine markers. An enamel bracelet from Gödöllő Palace commemorating the Hungarian coronation depicts the

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Badinter, *Maria Teresa*, 133.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

Empress surrounded by dozens of soldiers with raised swords atop the coronation hill (Figure 16). The absence of masculine markers – she holds no sword and is not on horseback – is noteworthy. In this scene, the *rex femineus* does not wield the sword; she commands the bodies that wield it. Kantorowicz describes how the *corpus mysticum* of sacred entities eventually turned into the idea of the “mystical body of the republic, the head of which is the Prince.”<sup>206</sup> Here, the Empress acts as the head of the mystical body of her army, and her masculine ability to command troops into battle links sovereign will to the armed bodies of her subjects. This completes Bassett’s image of *Mater Castrorum*, as she commands her soldiers’ loyalty while retaining a distinctly feminine appearance. Following Kantorowicz’s logic of Eucharistic transubstantiation, the Empress’ authority is reproduced across the field without requiring her physical participation in battle. When considered alongside the image of the Empress on horseback, the bracelet reveals a more structural, administrative kind of masculinity: the Empress is not performing kingship through bodily action, but exercising the king’s fundamental prerogative to mobilize war. The *rex femineus* hence emerges as a sovereign whose command over male violence renders her functionally, if not physically, masculine.



Figure 16. Rococo Bracelet Commemorating the Coronation of Maria Theresa as Queen of Hungary. Gold and enamel with painted mother-of-pearl inlays. Gödöllő Palace.<sup>207</sup>

<sup>206</sup> Kantorowicz, *The King's*, 212.

<sup>207</sup> *Rococo Bracelet*.

## EPILOGUE

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### *Princeps Despoticus: The Rise of Joseph II*

Empress Maria Theresa's success in evincing soldier loyalties rested upon the strategic projection of her persona. The fluid ancien régime of identity allowed the *rex femineus* to stage her power through portrayals that embraced religious, political, and gender dualities. Her *persona mixta* enabled her to perpetuate an image as a divine protector and a human guardian of her dynasty. As *Mater Castrorum*, the Empress sought to create policies that invited soldiers into confessional frameworks of reform that restructured masculinity and reoriented social advancement toward merit. Her reforms, paired with generous inducements to the officer corps, bolstered vertical ties of loyalty between the Empress and her soldiers. Maria Theresa's faithful embodiment of feminine roles, paired with masculine displays of militarism, allowed her to legitimize her role in the public sphere and the male-dominated theater of war.

The manifold manifestations of the Empress' image ensured she was imaginarily present across her realm, and that the success of the k.u.k army would be continually tied to its sovereign. Maria Theresa played out each side of her dualities through tailored portrayals in her coinage, portraiture, army banners, and correspondence. Beneath these ensembles and masks was not a woman assuming the role of a man, nor a woman who had molded the crown to her feminine style, but the gendered and political being of *rex femineus*.

Maria Theresa's reign can be read as a staging of sacral power in a direction that illuminated Joseph II's path towards enlightened despotism. Though herself a champion of aristocratic absolutism, the Empress gave birth to "perhaps the completest enlightened despot in European history."<sup>208</sup> Involved from the very beginning in the Empress' staging of political, religious, and

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<sup>208</sup> Beales, *Joseph II: In the Shadow*, 1:440.

gender dualities, Joseph would spend his early life observing the Empress' royal projections. Like the soldiers emerging from the Theresianum, Joseph had participated in the confessional framework that had imparted the enlightened language of natural and international law, and had fostered in him a sense of belonging to an enlightened intellectual elite that "felt itself superior to the older generation."<sup>209</sup> Emboldened by his desire to secure the welfare of his empire, Joseph set out remarkably radical political principles that aimed at instating "limited despotism" over the provinces, estates, and the hereditary lands.<sup>210</sup>

Though Joseph shared his mother's resolve to destroy the "worthless ballast of tradition," continuing her work of merging central authorities and establishing streamlined chains of command within the army and the bureaucracy, he denounced the Empress' carefully cultivated alliance and patronage networks as overly "feminine." Joseph viewed the promotion of allied interests as frivolous and meddling, and believed only men were capable of conducting themselves "professionally" in the service of an abstract idea.<sup>211</sup> This hardening of the gender dichotomy had frightening repercussions in the nineteenth century, when the idea that professionalism and objectivity were reserved for men would become commonplace, leading to a chasm between the private and public spheres that the Empress had tried to bridge.

Joseph's imposition of rationalized, centralized control across these allied loci of loyalty ignored the emboldening of military leadership and patronage networks that had defined the Empress' success. This departure would weaken Joseph's standing in his analogous conflicts: the War of Bavarian Succession (1778-1779) against Prussia and the Austro-Turkish War (1787-1791).

The Empress had been able to harness the ambiguity and fluidity of her age to project a dual image that moved seamlessly between seemingly contradictory registers of authority. Joseph II saw

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<sup>209</sup> Stollberg-Rilinger, *Maria Theresa*, 527.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 528.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 546.

little value in the ancien régime of identity, and sought to harden the categories of embodiment available to rulers. The fluid performances of identity that had enabled Maria Theresa to bind together a heterogeneous army gave way to a more austere vision of governance, one grounded in abstract principles but stripped of the symbolic and relational structures that had made authority legible and compelling to the Habsburgs' allies. Joseph's statecraft may have continued his mother's reforms along enlightened lines, but his approach undermined the ancien régime of identity that had made possible the sacral-symbolic projection of Empress Maria Theresa's power.

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P 307 - I. - 26

P 307 - III. - 22.

P 307 Box 1 Items I.3

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