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Beauty and the Bourse: Marine Le Pen, Class Grievances, and the Gendered Political Field

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Abstract:
This paper explains how gendered political symbolism answers class grievances in contemporary France. It draws from ethnographic observation and interviews of petty bourgeois adherents of the radical right wing Front National (FN) party, especially focusing on the love and admiration party members express for Marine Le Pen, the party's leader. In order to understand the "transfiguration" from class to gender, one must first understand how the French political field is symbolically "classed" and gendered in the eyes of FN adherents. FN supporters see the French political class as a bourgeois liberal class. Their critique of mainstream politics is therefore a critique of class, and vice versa. Furthermore, this bourgeois class is implicitly seen as a male class of professional politicians. Therefore, a symbolically potent woman is seen as the appropriate corrective to France's political-economic woes. Marine Le Pen is adored as the political daughter intimately known from childhood. She is a game changer as a woman, incarnating a familiar and impassioned corrective to male bourgeois elites.[1]

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In the spring of 2013 I visited the *Front National* (FN) party headquarters in the city of Nice. With a large resettlement of *pieds noirs*, white French citizens who had lived for generations in French colonial North Africa and had relocated to Metropolitan France following Moroccan and Tunisian independence in the 1950s, the southeast has long been the radical right party's heartland. Situated several blocks away from the city's yacht-filled harbour, the FN office was a scrappy, unglamorous affair. It was in need of a new coat of paint, but was filled with the energetic activities of the group of men I encountered that day. With the exception of one FN politician, they were all volunteers, busy preparing for the municipal elections of March 2014. Most had reached the age of retirement, small independent businessmen who are the traditional petty bourgeois base of the party.

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There was one younger man in his late twenties in the group, wearing a noticeably frayed shirt. He explained to me that he had been unemployed for years, and like most members of the FN he blamed a combination of the European Union, "ultraliberalism,"[2] globalization, and excessive immigration on his inability to secure employment. The older men chimed in with paternal worry over the fate of their young political comrade and his generation. They believed that they had been luckier, as they had benefited in their younger days from a strong and sovereign France which still had control over her borders, and her monetary and economic policy.

The spirit of their revered leader filled the rooms. Marine Le Pen's face was plastered on posters throughout the office. The coalition of "sovereignist" parties Marine leads is called "Rassemblement Bleu Marine"(The Navy Blue Group), placing Marine Le Pen herself at the symbolic centre of the list. The men in the Nice office, and most of the FN activists I have encountered throughout my research, refer to her by her first name. Jeremy,[3] the FN politician who was in the Nice headquarters that day, shrugged off my question as to whether he thought that it mattered that the party is now led by a woman. He thought that the main difference between Marine and Jean-Marie Le Pen, the party's founder and Marine's father, was that she was in the game to win. As opposed to her father who ran for presidential elections as an act of defiance, Jeremy saw Marine as a real presidential contender.

Although Jeremy had denied just a few minutes earlier that the party leader's gender mattered, he then named aloud all the major female politicians he could think of in recent French history, and proudly concluded that Marine was undoubtedly the most beautiful. Later on, sitting with several of the men on an old sofa at the front of the

[2] "Ultraliberalism" is synonymous with "neoliberalism."
[3] I have used false names for all the rank-and-file members mentioned in this paper. Two exceptions are Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, and Julien Rochedy, FN politicians who asked that I not anonymize their identities.

office, the men repeated that they found Marine to be quite attractive. Their view of her as beautiful did not trivialize or delegitimize her as their leader. On the contrary, they were pleased with her looks and saw her brand of corporality as somehow setting her apart from the rest.

The men spoke of Marine with love and admiration. The language they utilized and the sentiments they expressed when describing support for Marine Le Pen was infused with highly feminized imagery. FN members espouse a critical view of globalization, economic liberalism, and political elites who perpetuate the EU's economic policies, noting how these have affected small businesses and the working class. Through my observations in the southeast, they are even more concerned with Muslim immigrants and the supposed moral permissiveness and "political correctness" of political elites who have allowed immigrants to take control of French streets, destroy the "Judeo-Christian" values at the heart of French culture, and unfairly benefit from the French welfare state. They have turned to France's most symbolically potent female leader as the solution to France's economic woes. Furthermore, in a republican universalist political culture that tends to punish French female politicians who speak as women (see Scott 2005), Marine is admired as a woman and presents herself as the quintessential "femme moderne."

The question of how class grievances are answered by a symbolically compelling female figure raises the question of how gendered political symbolism answers class grievances – the central puzzle of this paper. How does Marine Le Pen's leadership answer French citizens' sense of political and socioeconomic injustice? How has the political daughter come to be seen as the solution to neoliberalism, globalization, immigration, and the technocratic elites at the helm of the French state and the European Union?

This paper draws from an ongoing political ethnography focusing on supporters of the *Front National*. This political ethnography entails an interpretive approach, paying

particular attention to the language and symbolism employed by those I am observing (see Wedeen 2009). It also requires understanding how institutional politics are viewed by everyday citizens, understandings which are distinct across country cases and in specific political milieux. I have thus far spent six months in the southeast of France, focusing on the region of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA), the longstanding petty bourgeois base of the party. I am also conducting interviews of party members while outside France. I will next continue in the deindustrializing northwest, a region of growing working class support for the FN.

I argue in this paper that in order to understand how feminized political symbolism answers class grievances, one must first understand that FN supporters' criticism of Muslim immigration and liberal economic policy is filtered through a critique of France's elite political class. Issue-specific contestations are expressed as a critique of class. FN adherents perceive political elites as the bourgeois products of France's most prestigious universities, "men in suits" who are indistinguishable from one another despite party affiliation. They are the salaried career politicians, indistinguishable also from the European Union's men in suits. As such, they are the ideological carriers of excessive liberalism in the policy domains of immigration and "EU-philia".

By contrast, Marine is seen as a woman born for politics. Among longstanding party loyalists she is prized as the political daughter who grew up within the party, and is thus a person for whom politics is eminently personal and passionate, as opposed to the male career politicians and cosmopolitan technocrats in Paris and Brussels. Older members speak of her in maternalistic and paternalistic terms. By contrast, younger and newer members see her as the quintessential "modern woman"; a twice-divorced single mother who has had to make do in today's troubled economy. New adherents, male and female, speak of a strong personal identification with her as a woman who understands their limited economic opportunities and the complexities of contemporary family life,

and who is a source of inspiration for them. For young and old she embodies a riposte to the distant men in suits running the country. FN imagery presents the elite political class in masculinized, rational-bureaucratic terms. In turn, FN adherents seize upon highly feminized political symbolism in order to articulate their critique of the elite political class and its ideologies. In this way gendered political symbolism answers class grievances.

In the paper to follow, I first review existing scholarship on the rise of the new right in Europe; gender and politics; gendered symbolism and social movements; and gender politics and populism. I point to the difficulties these bodies of scholarship have in accounting for how gendered political symbolism answers class grievances. Part II briefly describe my methods. Part III constitutes the empirical substance of the paper. I first demonstrate how FN adherents describe the problem with France's political class, and how they transfigure a critique of class into a critique of male elites. I then identify several intensely feminized themes FN adherents employ in describing Marine Le Pen as the necessary corrective to France's political and economic crises. I conclude by briefly reiterating the usefulness of my approach to the study of gender and politics, populism, the new right, and contemporary political disenchantment and re-enchantment.

I. Literature Review

Existing scholarship on radical right wing parties and the current crisis in European party politics has been inattentive to the impact of gendered political symbolism in explaining contemporary trends in political enchantment and disenchantment. Instead, this literature has focused on the two key variables of economic crisis and immigration as possible explanations for voter support of radical right wing parties in Europe (e.g. Arzheimer 2009). Some scholars note how economic crisis can breed antipathy to immigrants (e.g. Rydgren 2008), and can result in citizens losing trust in government and political elites (Norris 1995). Mobilizing grievances against immigration is the only issue

shared by all right wing parties in Europe (Ivarsflaten 2008). Others rather focus on the dynamics of party competition (e.g. Meguid 2005; Stockemer 2014), noting that radical right parties' success is relative to the fate of other niche or mainstream parties. Also focusing on voting patterns, some scholars have been more attentive to variations in the class basis of voters' support for right-wing parties (e.g. Kalb and Halmai 2011; Gougou and Mayer 2013).

Class especially, and to an increasing degree, gender, are considered by scholars as important independent variables explaining voting preferences. Drawing primarily from voting and survey data, voters' sociological traits of class and gender are employed to explain voting outcomes. However, I argue that it is also important to understand how political grievances are themselves "classed" and gendered, even when they are not overtly about men's or women's issues. European Union membership and immigration, for example, are not like policy domains such as maternity leave or the right to collective bargaining for a predominantly male employment sector. Nonetheless, within the field of contemporary French politics, EU membership and "lax" immigration have been implicitly, but effectively, structured by the FN as policy domains carried out by highly suspect male political elites. The "solution" is a woman who represents the opposite pole of the masculine political class. If asked directly whether Marin Le Pen's gender matters to FN adherents, they typically deny that it is significant. Nonetheless, I have observed the masculinization of political grievances and the feminization of political enchantment.

Feminist scholarship on women's recruitment into party politics, the gender gap in male/female patterns of voting, and women's representation in legislative politics, is centrally concerned with how gender relations structure the political arena. Work on the gender gap in men and women's voting patterns has shown how women in Europe once tended to cast more conservative votes compared to men, as opposed to more contemporary survey data indicating that women voters have moved more to the left

(e.g. Abendschön and Steinmetz 2014) – although there has been an increase in the proportion of women voting for radical right parties (Givens 2004; Mudde 2007; Mayer 2013).

In addition to explaining the gender gap in voting patterns, much feminist scholarship has focused on women's formal and informal barriers into legislative elections in specific country cases and across parliamentary systems. Institutional differences focusing on formal structures explain a great deal of the variation in women's success when competing for elected office. Scholarship focusing on national-level institutional differences notes the effect of distinct electoral systems on women's chances for success in electoral politics. The difference is most widely observed between proportional representation (PR) systems and plurality-majority (PM) systems. Research is remarkably consistent in showing that women candidates benefit more from PR systems (e.g. Hughes 2007; Kenworthy and Malami 1999; Lovenduski and Hills 1981; Matland 1993, 1998; Norris 1985, 1997; Paxton 1997; Rule 1987). Women candidates can also attract a larger share of support by women voters, especially if they focus on family issues that explicitly appeal to women voters (e.g. Dolan 2006).

Although women still face barriers in succeeding in party politics, the situation is changing, and women are joining parties more than ever (Kittilson 2008; Kunovich 2005; Lovenduski and Norris 1993). Gender quotas are one vehicle through which these transformations have come about. Nearly half of the world's countries today have introduced some type of electoral gender quota, whether it is through national legislation or self-imposed party rules (Dahlreup 2007). The French National Assembly introduced gender "parity" in 2000, requiring that 50% of all party lists be composed of women.

Scholarship on the processes predicting selection of female candidates and leadership for a party is less developed than research on women's election into legislative assemblies. Parties have formal rules for candidate selection, but usually informal rules

have as much influence, if not more, on the outcomes of candidate selection. Parties also vary in the degree to which they balance formal and informal processes in candidate selection, and gender quotas of course affect the degree to which women are selected as party candidates. Pippa Norris has found that gender quotas best achieve their aims in formal and localized recruitment systems (1993). Many parties in "old" democracies are now making candidate selection more inclusive, especially in a bid to rejuvenate their support in light of crises experienced by mainstream established parties in much of the advanced industrialized world (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Scarrow 2000; Bartolini and Mair 2001; Mair and Van Biezen 2001; Whiteley 2011). Rahat and Hazan (2001) have found, though, that "democratizing" candidate selection can decrease the diversity of candidate lists. Left-leaning parties provide greater support to women's candidacies (Beckwith 1992; Caul 1999), and parties with women gatekeepers are also found to support more female candidate selection (Cheng and Tavits 2011).

In most parties, the internal mechanisms leading to formation of the party political elite are hidden even further behind closed doors than rank and file candidate selection (Gallagher and Marsh 1988; Norris 1993). Some parties hold open primaries. However, leadership selection in many parties remains secretive, and even in cases where the parties have turned to primaries for choosing a party leader or presidential candidate, there are still behind-the-scenes manoeuvres leading to the ascendancy of some candidates as primaries candidates. Research on the informal mechanisms affecting selection of women leaders is especially scarce. Robert Putnam sand Sylvia Bashevkin note that the proportion of women decreases the more important the position within the party (Putnam 1976; Bashevkin 1993). More recent research confirms the continued dearth of women in high-ranking party leadership (e.g. Black and Erickson 2000; Young and Cross 2003). Women are more likely to enter executive leadership positions through parliamentary systems where they are heads of party lists, rather than presidential systems

(Jalalzai 2008).

The above accounts offer robust insights into the presence or absence of female candidates in diverging electoral systems and parties, and to some degree can account for the rise of women leaders within certain parties. However, there are few answers that can be generated from scholarship on gender and electoral politics to account for why the symbolic feminization of a political party – furthermore a traditionally highly masculine party – can answer political-economic grievances. This scholarship cannot answer the direct, and unprompted, connection FN supporters make between their views on French immigration policy and neoliberalism, their critique of male political elites, and the party's symbolic feminization.

By contrast, studies of women's political activism in social movements, and to some degree studies of populism, have been much more attuned to the power of gendered political symbolism in explaining recruitment of political support. Work on women's movements especially emphasize how the symbolic power of women as mothers, wives and widows has enabled women to gain key rights. These identity categories can be the source of political claims-making within movements seeking welfare rights such as maternity leave or publicly funded childcare programs, labour rights, and in peace activism (e.g. Koven and Michel 1990; Michel 1993, 199; Yuval-Davis 1997).

Yet the FN is not a movement making maternalist or paternalist claims. Scholarship on women's social movements shows how they mobilize around issues defined as "women's issues," and recruit a female base to support these causes. By contrast, I have observed that FN supporters are reluctant to see their party as making claims in the name of either men or women. Just as they see themselves as "neither left nor right," they claim to be neither pink nor blue, as if gender politics are irrelevant. At the same time, however, they describe Marine's virtues in highly feminized terms when

explaining why she is the answer to perceived political and economic failures.

The few scholars who focus on the link between gendered political symbolism and populist leaders in Latin America note how masculine imagery cultivated by populist leaders, such as that of the ladies' man, the athlete, the Catholic saviour, and most powerful of all, the father of the nation, could buttress populist support (see Kampwirth 2010 for a review; see also Stein 1980, and Conniff 1999).[4] Argentina's Evita Perón stands as the female populist leader of note in this work. As wife of Juan Perón, Evita was arguably one of the most important female political leaders in Latin American history. A charismatic leader in her own right, she often invoked the love between her, her husband, and "the people" as a wedge against the political oligarchy (Navarro 1982). Contemporary supporters of Argentina's Peronist party continue to invoke her in their everyday political lives, with women activists key as frontline actors delivering social-work type services as they reproduce clientalist networks (Auyero 2001).

Although scholarship on Latin American populism is the most attuned to the link between gendered political symbolism and support for populist leadership, it does not sufficiently explain *why* this link exists. Just as there are too many common sense assumptions that economic crisis results in growing support for xenophobic, "sovereignist" right wing parties, there is an unexplored link made in scholarship on Latin American populism and neo-populism that macho and/or paternalistic tropes widen the appeal of populist leaders. However, for example, why do supporters perceive the "ladies' man" as the solution to oligopolies and oligarchies? Stated most broadly,

[4] I will not review here debates over the definition of populism. For expediency's sake, I accept Kenneth Roberts' summary of the five core properties of populist movements, although it does not map perfectly onto the French political field. According to Roberts, populism incorporates, 1) Paternalistic and personal political leadership (though not necessarily charismatic); 2) A multiclass coalition pulling in the "subaltern"; 3) Mobilization which bypasses more institutionalized links between leaders and masses; 4) An eclectic ideology; and 5) Redistributive or clientalistic economic policies aimed at achieving a material basis for popular support (Roberts 1995). See also Jansen 2011.

why does gendered political symbolism come to stand as a solution to economic and political woes?

II: Methods

I am employing comparative political ethnographic methods in order to understand this link between the critique of liberal bourgeois politics and economic policy, and gendered political symbolism. Through participant observation analyzing the inner meaning of class, politics, and gender for FN supporters, supplemented by interviews, and an analysis of French class relations and their co-articulation with the political field, I can "glean the meanings that people under study attribute to their social and political reality" (Schatz 2009). This entails an interpretive approach, paying particular attention to the language and symbolism employed by those I am observing (see also Wedeen 2009, 2010).

Chabal and Daloz argue that it is imperative to understand country-specific cultural meanings in order to understand how individuals experience politics (2006). They employ national comparisons in order to demonstrate the utility of their approach. My methodological approach for this overall project draws from their insights, yet it will compare class milieux within France. Violaine Girard's rare ethnographic study of working class support for the FN in a "périurbain" neighbourhood, a working class area inhabited by property-owning individuals who have left cities for cheap outer suburban living, shows the value of an interpretive approach for understanding FN support. She argues that workers are seeking economic stability more than advances in cultural capital, and that the FN's messages resonate with this social group, as opposed to the messages of cultural and educational opportunities advanced by the left (2013). Girard therefore seeks to understand how the area's residents experience class in order to understand support for the FN.

However, Girard too does not go far enough, as she does not consider the nature of the *political* field and the symbolic valence of the party in order to provide a more complete picture of how conceptions of class intertwine with conceptions of institutionalized politics. Moreover, she does not incorporate an analysis of gender into her account, a social axis which I have found to be pivotal to understanding FN support for Marine Le Pen in the southeast. The comparative political ethnography I am employing seeks to understand the more precise links between diverse class positions, how this affects perceptions of institutionalized politics, and how the gendering of political symbolism resonates with FN supporters. Thus far I have completed six months of ethnographic research amongst primarily petty bourgeois FN supporters in the southeast of France. I have also conducted interviews while outside France, amounting to eighteen interviews thus far.

I will continue in the de-industrializing northwest of France, focusing on a more classically working class region which has transitioned to support of the FN. This comparative ethnography is aimed at identifying whether the same association between class and politics, and whether the same transfiguration of class grievances to support of female populism is occurring amongst the FN's new working class supporters.

Part III: <u>Ethnographic Evidence</u>

1. The critique of politics as a critique of bourgeois class; the critique of class as a critique of bourgeois politics:

Zeev Sternhell has traced the ideational origins of the French radical right at the start of the twentieth century to a mutation away from Marxism; a worldview that is rooted in a hatred of the bourgeoisie (1983). Aversion to bourgeois elites persists among FN supporters I have observed and interviewed in the southeast, expressed more specifically in distaste for the liberal elites of the 1968 generation. The FN tightly ties this class and

its putatively cosmopolitan, morally lax, and relativistic worldview with the Socialist party and parts of the centre-right UMP party. These are in their minds the civil servants and politicians who have colonized the French state, steering France off course for decades, and expressed in slack immigration policy, the decline of the secular republic, and membership in the excessively liberal European Union. Recent elections attest to the party's appeal amongst working class voters, the unemployed, small business owners, wage-earners, and the politically disaffected who refuse to define themselves as either left or right, and who have a history of abstaining or spoiling ballots (Shields 2013).

The fairly institutionalized production of French political elites through the École Nationale d'Administration (ÉNA) has given the FN a clear target for its populist critique. Charles De Gaulle founded the ÉNA after the Second World War in order to open top government positions to meritocratic competition. Over the years the school has pressed its graduates into a shared worldview, regardless of party affiliation (Ziegler 1995). The school has moved from Paris to Strasbourg, the seat of the European Parliament, symbolizing its European and not just French orientation. This has fuelled the FN criticism of a fusion between cosmopolitan French national political elites and Brussels governance.

The social background of many of my FN contacts I observed in the southeast are what might be labeled "lower middle class" or "petty bourgeois" ("la petite bourgeoisie"), adhering remarkably closely to Marx's classic account of this substratum as small shop-keepers, or workers who manage the production or distribution of commodities produced and owned by wealthier bourgeoisie (1978). They had long enjoyed comfort and security, which they understood was thanks also to the French state. This was especially so among the older generation who were keenly aware of their own sense of relative security, and who lamented how this economic security was faltering for their children and grandchildren.

Due to the strongly overlapping association between institutionalized politics and bourgeois elites amongst the FN's traditional supporters, I have found that their *critique of the bourgeois liberal social class is a critique of politics; and vice versa, the critique of politics is a critique of class.* Their view of institutional politics is that mainstream parties, and the French state, have been colonized by the same social class, regardless of party affiliation. A frequent joke among FN activists, and employed by Marine Le Pen in political speeches, is to refer to the largest centre-right and centre-left parties as the same party. The PS (Parti Socialiste) and the centre-right UMP (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire) are commonly referred to as the "UMPS," indicating that for FN adherents the differences between them are negligible. Both parties are seen as populated by bourgeois elites who do not understand the difficulties faced by French citizens far from Paris's fashionable cafes. FN adherents blame support for the European Union and its technocratic governance, and French immigration policy, on the misguided notions carried by this class. The critique of these policies are therefore critiques of bourgeois values.

At the annual May 1st FN march in Paris in 2013 I spoke to a woman from a heavily deindustrialized town in the northwest of France, an area that the FN is increasingly winning over. The woman was of working class origin. She explained to me that she and her daughter had had to leave the town where they had lived for decades, and where they both work. She claimed that the area had become inundated with Muslim immigrants who harassed them all the time, and that their daily lives had become unbearable due to constant fear of violence on the streets. But, she claimed, the authorities cast a blind eye on this harassment, and instead gave these immigrants special housing rights, which is why they lived in the same neighbourhood. Not able to withstand it anymore, they moved to another town which was more expensive, and which has also resulted in a longer commute to work. Though she clearly felt disdain for immigrants themselves, like many of my informants, her attitude towards immigrants was

filtered through a critique of state elites and bureaucrats, and a sense of injustice being perpetrated against white, native French citizens in the unfair distribution of public housing and failure to take care of "native" citizens' welfare.

A pervasive theme I heard among party activists and politicians was disdain for the 1968 generation, and for that generation's political-ideological outlook, which they viewed as having destroyed French patrimony, sovereignty, and the moral order. In Nice I interviewed a woman in her sixties who had also been a party adherent for decades, and who had remained a rank and file party activist until her husband's death, after which she became a full-time politician. She is now a member of the regional council of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur province. She was one of many interviewees who mentioned to me that the problem with France was its decadence following the events of 1968. Since then, she claimed, there is too little law and order, and too much political correctness allowing for bad behaviour on the part of immigrants. She blamed the 1968 political class on France's economic woes, and on its "excessively liberal" attitude towards Muslim immigrants who "refuse" to adhere to secular republican values.

Likewise, in a lengthy interview I had with a woman who was the top of the municipal electoral list in a town just outside of Avignon, she articulately described to me her journey from being a radical leftist to being a leading FN politician. Pauline represents the new face of the FN.[5] She is intelligent and respected in her community as the head of the local elementary school. The town where she lives has undergone dramatic economic decline. The city centre is now largely shuttered, and when I visited her at her home I could mainly see immigrant men and women on the otherwise empty streets. As the headmistress of the local secondary school, she felt enormous frustration with what she perceived were the typical problems of immigrant families' encounters with the French school system; poor families with parents who could not properly

[5] Conversation took place on July 18, 2013.

discipline their children and adapt to French culture. Especially frustrating to her, however, was her sense that her hands were tied in terms of instilling discipline and respect among her students, many of them children of Muslim immigrants. Because of the arcane rules and procedures set in motion by 1968ers, because people of that generation were too politically correct and bowed to "communitarianism" (a bad word in republican France), she could not instil French values in her own pupils.

Pauline is anti-elitist to the bone. She grew up in a working class family, with a factory worker father. But she had gained an education and has had a very successful career, in fact more so than her husband who has struggled as a small businessman in the tourism industry. The family survives on her income. She had grown up within a family that supported the socialist party, and she herself had become more radically left, always despising elitism. Yet, in her mind, since 1968 elitism has melded with liberal political correctness, a cosmopolitan, moral decadence that has forgotten French values and history. This generation's permissiveness was also detrimental, in her view, to the fate of Muslim immigrants, who would never be given the opportunity to succeed in France because of this institutionalized moral laxity.

Pauline insisted that she was not racist, nor anti-immigrant, nor anti-Muslim. She claimed rather that she loved her secular republic, its history, and the richness of its culture, language, and cuisine. She wanted the best for her students, regardless of their religion and place of origin, and wanted to give them all the opportunities France could offer. Yet 1968 had worked to destroy that possibility by allowing for too much cultural relativism. Because of the excessive political correctness imposed on her by 1968 bureaucrats, she felt she could not provide the kind of education she wished to for her immigrant pupils.

Pauline's words exemplified how racial tensions were not interpreted as being due to the racist outlook of FN adherents. Rather, she described racial tensions as the

product of failed elitist state projects, carried by a particular generation and social class that embraced a relativistic, cosmopolitan worldview. This attitude is exemplified in a speech by Stéphane Ravier, a fiery FN politician who has since been elected as a local mayor of Marseille's seventh district and to the Senate. In June 2012, when he was still a representative in the Regional Council of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, he colourfully declared at a council meeting that housing plans to encourage diversity and greater immigrant integration were the clientalist work of the "Green Taliban, the Stalinist fossils à la française, and bobo socialists."

2. Marine's femininity as the answer to France's woes

Theme 1: ***The Political Daughter: Politics as Personal and Passionate***

An FN poster dating from the 2012 presidential election and depicts Marine as a Madonna-like icon bathed in light. Her softly-lit face is contrasted to the shadowy row of "men in suits," male Presidential candidates from across the political spectrum whose uniform of suit and tie suggests a male professional political class which cannot be trusted, regardless of party affiliation [see Image 1]. The poster exemplifies how the supposed transparency of Marine Le Pen's life, with all its imperfections, is treated by FN loyalists as a corrective to those whom Max Weber would have designated as those living "off" rather than "for" politics (Weber 1946). Marine is adored as the daughter of the party's revered founder, in contrast to salaried and self-serving career politicians.

In my previous work comparing the gender politics of military service in France and the United States, I have questioned a common modernization thesis presumed by numerous scholars which claims that a marker of political modernity is a decline in familial lineage as grounds for political legitimacy (see Geva 2011, 2013, 2014. See also Charrad 2001; Jalazai 2008; and Jalalzai and Krook 2010). Based on Max Weber's classification of types of political legitimacy, such scholarship has contrasted the

"traditional" lineage-based authority in a country such as India with rational-bureaucratic grounds for political legitimacy in Western Europe (Weber 1978). The *Front National* (*FN*), like other parties in France today, is one party where we see the success of lineage-based politics, even in parties where political leadership has turned towards elections in selecting a party leader.

Like all post-war parties in Western Europe, the FN has had to respond to changes affecting Western European parties. In Lipset and Rokkan's 1967 classic book, *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*, they argued that European parties developed in the interwar period around social cleavages such as class and religion, cleavages that remained stable in the post-war era (see also Duverger 1954). However, mass political parties have experienced crisis since the 1990s (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Scarrow 2000; Bartolini and Mair 2001; Mair and Van Biezen 2001; Perrineau, ed. 2003; Whiteley 2011). There is abundant scholarship tracing the effects of neoliberalism and the global financial crisis on the rise of the new right (e.g. Berezin 2009), a development that has benefitted the *Front National* (Perrineau 1997; Mayer 2002a, 2002b). Some parties are responding by initiating changes such as primaries for electing party leaders (Dalton and Weldon 2005; Scarrow and Gezgor 2010), a manoeuvre introduced by several French parties, including the FN.

The global financial crisis, loss of mainstream voters to a growing new right, and organizational innovation, however, are not unique to France. More distinctive to France is the "presidentialization" of parties; and passage of an electoral gender parity law in 2000. Since the 1958 Constitution inaugurating the Fifth Republic, which re-crafted the role of President by creating a hybrid parliamentary and presidential system, party politics have become presidentialized. Parties invest great resources in selecting a Presidential candidate, and Presidential candidates tend to run campaigns that stray from the party's ideological and institutional core (Gaffney 1990; Cole 1993).

The parity law is a more recent change. It has led to gains in women's representation in the Senate, the European Parliament, and regional councils, however has had less of an effect on the National Assembly, which is organized through a single member system, and is not forcefully targeted by the parity law (Sineau 2005). Smaller parties, such as the *Front National*, have been more likely to conform due to their inability to bear the financial penalties of failing to comply (see Sineau 2005; Opello 2006).

Analysis of the debates leading to the law's implementation reveals that parity advocates strategically argued that increased female representation would revitalize French political culture (Lépinard 2006). Avoiding claims that women politicians would represent female interests, the parity advocates swayed Parliament by resorting to essentialist claims of sexual difference, arguing that women would reinvigorate French politics. Parity could adhere to republican principles of universal citizenship by claiming that all humans were either male or female, and thus it was not offering a gender quota, but a means of representing all of humanity (see Scott 2005). Consequently, hopes were pinned on women as political game-changers just as mainstream parties were experiencing crisis. Within the next decade, Le Pen was chosen as leader of her party (and before her Ségolène Royal made history as the Socialist Party's presidential nominee in 2007).

Women leaders today are particularly well situated as populist leaders, as they can literally embody an anti-elite, anti-establishment form of politics. French populism in particular has sometimes been labeled "Bonapartism," typically characterized by desire for a strong state, a personalized cult of authority, claims of national grandeur and independence, and socially rooted in an alliance between capital and labor (Rémond 1982). The initial concept of Bonapartism is attributed to Marx's class-based account of the events of the mid-nineteenth century outlined in the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoléon*, analyzing Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte's election as the first elected President of

France in 1848, and his subsequent coup of 1851. Yet, in my view, an underappreciated aspect of Marx's analysis is his depiction of how Louis Napoléon, the nephew, symbolically tied himself to his uncle Napoléon Bonaparte, creating an image of dynastic continuity. Though we can hardly deduce from this that familial dynastic dynamics are key features of Bonapartism or populism at large, we can nonetheless identify a longer history in France of class grievances expressing themselves as political grievances, and which can result in a turn to a dynastic figure who symbolically represents French grandeur and history, in contrast to liberal elites. Marine Le Pen's rise to power has developed from these fertile grounds, thanks in part to her reception as the political daughter for whom politics is eminently personal and passionate.

Aside from the concrete organizational benefits afforded her by being the daughter of the party's leader, I have observed that Marine Le Pen's role as political daughter has enabled her to offer a compelling narrative that at once offers an antidote to cosmopolitan Paris and Brussels elites, while also enabling her to traverse the difficult discursive terrain laid out by the parity law. As a female leader within republican France, she cannot legitimately claim to represent "women's interests." Yet, as political daughter she can play the role of game-changer, distant from the old guard political elites, and yet keeper of the FN tradition. Her life is bathed in light, as opposed to the dark recesses of EU politics.

Nearly every older FN adherent I have talked to told me that they had met Marine as a girl, and they lovingly remembered her from those days. Mathilde, a woman in her seventies from the city of Antibes, and a lifelong FN adherent, took pleasure in telling me the inside stories she knew about the Le Pen family. Having insight into the Le Pen family signalled intimacy with its "first family," and loyalty to the party. Mathilde's tidbits about the Le Pen biography were not lascivious gossip, but rather narratives of the honourable and strong character of the Le Pen clan. Older adherents

spoke of Jean-Marie Le Pen with adulation, as if he was a messianic figure. They would glow and tell me about the various times they met him throughout the decades of his party leadership; about his wicked sense of humour, his warmth, and his great love for France.

Mathilde described Marine Le Pen as a young woman who was wounded by the liberal media barbs pointed at her father. She therefore "had to learn to be strong," and indeed a strong woman she has become.[6] The same was true for Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, Marine Le Pen's niece, herself an FN member of the National Assembly. Mathilde whispered to me that she had heard from reliable sources that Marion Maréchal-Le Pen's mother, Marine's sister, was very sick with cancer. Nonetheless, both Marion Maréchal-Le Pen and Marine Le Pen put on a brave face. She described them as being like French foot soldiers in the war of politics, whose commitment to public service and the French people goes beyond private needs.

Although Marine Le Pen has occasionally distanced herself from her father, especially when he has publicly uttered anti-Semitic statements, the FN's political theatrics stage a narrative of political dynasty at the heart of the party. Jean-Marie Le Pen is still a regular presence at major party events, and he is currently honorary president of the party. At a Paris rally during the spring of 2013, the event was crowned by Marine Le Pen's closing speech. She was placed front and centre as she delivered her speech, with her father proudly seated on the stage next to her, slightly off-centre and wearing a powder blue tie matching Marine's scarf. Behind the stage a massive poster of Joan of Arc had been erected, a figure with whom Marine Le Pen deftly ties herself [see Image 2]. Multiple layers of lineage were on display. Here stood the party's political daughter in

[6] Conversation on July 28, 2013.

a businesslike black suit, with her father to her side. At the same time, she links herself to Joan of Arc, the soldier-maiden.[7]

Theme 2: ***Marine and Familial Modernity***

Pauline, the headmistress from outside Avignon, had described her conversion to the FN as due to an encounter with the Le Pen father. However, she explained that she really threw herself into the party and became an FN candidate thanks to Marine Le Pen. Feeling increasingly frustrated with the public education system, she started searching for alternatives to the mainstream left. When she heard that Jean-Marie Le Pen would be visiting her town, to her own surprise – almost as a joke - she decided to go see him in person. After his speech she then introduced herself to him. Le Pen (the father) personally contacted her the next day, and invited her to join the FN.

However, Pauline claimed that what really enabled her to make the jump from being a member of the Socialist Party to an FN candidate was the encounter with Marine Le Pen, and reading Marine Le Pen's autobiography. Pauline found that she saw herself in Marine, two women of the same generation who needed to work to make money for their families, but who did not want to emasculate men. Marine had divorced twice and knew firsthand the complications of contemporary family life. Pauline therefore insisted that neither she nor Marine represented women's interests, as they sought to advance the interests of all French people. At the same time, Pauline's strong identification with Marine's experiences as a working mother and breadwinner enabled Pauline to make the leap into a party she had been taught to disdain from childhood.

She expressed mixed feelings about the electoral parity law, which she viewed as problematic because it forced the party lists to incorporate women who were not that

[7]Although Marine Le Pen has long been in a relationship with Louis Aliot, the FN vice-president, I speculate she will not remarry. With Elizabethan-like imagery, she is married to no one but the party and the French people.

committed to politics. Yet, she also grudgingly conceded that it helped bring women into the party. Women, she claimed, were "better at listening and responding to people's needs."

In an interview I conducted with Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, Marine's niece and the youngest member of the French National Assembly in French history, she was initially reluctant to define herself and Marine as feminist. Although she initially answered my questions with prefabricated sound bites, the conversation took a surprising turn when I asked her about whether she considers herself and Marine to be feminist. She became animated and admitted it was a question no journalist had ever asked her.[8] She emphasized that it is her party which adheres most to the parity law. Then going off script, she claimed that she and the women of the party were "not like those feminists," meaning the left liberal feminists who were "more masculine." On the contrary, she saw Marine as "very feminine." Maréchal-Le Pen maintained, however, that only Marine really cares for Frenchwomen's security. The problem of immigrants' aggression against native Frenchwomen was another issue that Maréchal-Le Pen saw as being swept under the carpet by most French politicians. Marine had also been key in attracting more young women into the party, and Maréchal-Le Pen giggled that in turn has helped the party recruit more young men.

After considering these issues, Maréchal-Le Pen concluded that yes, after all, Marine is the true feminist. She was so surprised by this line of questioning that she then gave me the direct contact details of several FN activists and politicians in the region, giving them the green light to speak to me as I was "different from the rest." Already the next morning one of them called me to make herself available to me.

[8] FN politicians and members frequently assumed I was a journalist, although I always explained exactly who I was and that I was doing academic research.

Julien Rochedy, until recently the leader of the FN's youth movement, likewise emphasized that Marine's "modernity" had been key to his entrance into the party, and to attracting younger members. In his early twenties, Rochedy represents another new face of the party [see Image 3]. With a presentation of self that adheres more closely to the students of elite Parisian universities, he has tried to shape himself as a radical intellectual, and has published a book with his reflections on Nietzsche's political philosophy. Rochedy claimed that it is his generation above all which has had to face "unemployment, insecurity, and loss of identity." Whereas forty years ago their parents' generation might have voted for right or left parties, today young people "have had enough of political parties." Instead, "they want to try something else; but that 'something else' is patriotism. Patriotism today is incarnated by Marine Le Pen." Furthermore, "Marine Le Pen could be our mother, whereas Jean-Marie Le Pen is our grandfather. By definition one is closer to one's mother than grandfather."[9]

During the time I spent in the southeast of France in the spring and summer 2013, France was overtaken by a way of protests against legalization of same-sex marriage.[10] I found, however, that FN members I spoke to were largely unmoved by the topic. In one discussion I had with a woman politician from Menton, a town outside of Nice and near the Italian border, she expressed a typical sentiment I heard repeated throughout my research. She viewed the issue of same-sex marriage as a sideshow intended to "hide France's real problems; unemployment and immigration."[11] The fact that so much energy and time were being poured into the battle over same-sex marriage was yet another sign of French political elites' decadence.

[9] Interviewed April 24, 2014.
[10] The anti-same sex marriage movement, called *La Manif Pour Tous,* is the topic of a distinct paper I am writing.
[11] Interviewed July 18, 2013.

This was especially brought home to me at the May 1st rally in Paris in 2013. In Paris I met up with a group of women from the PACA region who then invited me to join them for lunch at the McDonalds across the Louvre Museum. They had spent the night on an FN bus from Nice to Paris to attend the rally, and despite not having slept a wink they were buzzing from excitement after listening to Marine Le Pen's speech at the rally. While we at our lunch one of them was using her smartphone to email photos from the rally to her grandson and his girlfriend. Another woman in her eighties, who claimed that her husband had died during WWII as a resistance fighter, chortled that she hoped the young couple would never marry. "Marriage kills love!" she cackled, and the table of women erupted into knowing laughter. Far from espousing "conservative" family values, the women were somewhat sardonic about the institution of marriage.

Later during lunch I asked the women what they thought of the proposed law to legalize same-sex marriage. In response to my question, one set of sisters from a *pied noir* family that had resettled in Antibes launched into a tirade against Christiane Taubira, the Socialist Justice Minister who had proposed the law recognizing gay marriage. The law to legalize same-sex marriage is popularly called "the Taubira law." But when I asked FN adherents what they thought of the Taubira law, I realized that for them "the Taubira law" referred to something entirely different; a law from 2001 which Christiane Taubira had proposed, and which eventually passed, memorializing the history of slavery in France and its colonies. Back in 2001, Christiane Taubira was a French Guyanese representative in the French National Assembly. The 2001 law identifies the colonial slave trade as a crime against humanity. It requires that school curricula educate children about the history of the colonial slave trade, and commemorate the crimes of slavery. This was the first "Taubira law," and twelve years later it was the prime "Taubira law" of import for FN supporters.

Christiane Taubira has since been cast by the FN as a national traitor. For the women at our McDonalds lunch, their tirade was against her suspicious stature as a black woman from the overseas department of French Guyana. They saw her as separatist "who was not a true French patriot." When I then specified that I had meant to ask about the proposal to legalize gay marriage, their tone softened. The sisters explained that they had a lesbian sister, and that they did not care much about the proposal to legalize gay marriage. They objected to the libertinism of "Gay Pride" parades, but if gays and lesbians wanted to have their own families, they were not bothered by it.

That is not to say that all the FN members I have spoken to are in favour of gay marriage. Marion Maréchal-Le Pen represents a more socially conservative wing of the party, and she participated in some of the rallies against same-sex marriage. Pierre, a retired jeweller from Nice, suggested to me that same-sex marriage would ruin the republican institution of marriage, which was supposed to be an engine of French demographic growth and a key wedge against immigration.[12] Nonetheless, Mathilde and others mentioned rumours that someone "high up" in the party was gay.[13] They saw this as evidence of the party's openness to gays and lesbians. Additionally, Marine Le Pen remained conspicuously silent about the issue of same-sex marriage when it was legalized in 2013.

Theme 3: *White Female Corporality*

Antoine, an FN activist in Nice, claimed that Justice Minister Taubira was a Freemason, which he said was true of all black politicians. In his view, all the problematic laws of the

[12] Conversation from May 13, 2013.
[13] Florian Philippot, Marine's right-hand man, was recently "outed" as gay by a gossip magazine, suggesting the rumours were about him.

country really emanated from Freemasonry.[14] Another lifelong FN member I met in Paris at the May 1st rally, and with whom I tried to discuss the question of same-sex marriage could not get beyond repeatedly declaring: "Madame Taubira, c'est une negresse!"[15] As opposed to the highly suspicious Black Justice Minister from French Guyana, Marine is seen as a white woman of French soil and blood. For example, at the FN "summer school" in Marseille in September 2013, a wine seller was selling his *Cuvée du Front National,* with a photo of Marine on the wine label. Beneath her photo the label read, "The People's Blood" [see image 4].

At the May 1st rally in Paris, I was standing in the crowd close to the podium, but I could barely hear Marine's speech because a group of women next to me was loudly discussing how elegant Marine looked. One of them lamented, however, the fact that Marine was covering her legs by wearing pants, because Marine "has extraordinary legs, extraordinary!"

As I described at the start of this paper, the theme of Marine's beauty is a common one among FN circles. So is the view that she "incarnates" a new spirit of hope. In the FN's first weekly newsletter of 2015, the message repeated that "Marine Le Pen incarnates the renewal France needs."

One final illustration of Marine Le Pen's symbolic valence captures numerous strands of how Marine's lineage and corporality are celebrated by FN supporters. Pauline, the party's educational advisor, explained to me that she sees the FN's head political bureau as split by two sorts of people. The first group are those leaders whose actions are oriented towards a long-term temporal horizon, persons concerned with

[14] To my surprise, not a single anti-Semitic statement has been made to me throughout my research. Marine Le Pen has sought to eradicate this from her party, and so far party adherents have been disciplined in my presence. On the other hand, public articulations of conspiracy theories against Freemasonry still abound, as do anti-Muslim and anti-Roma statements.

[15] This roughly translates to calling the Justice Minister "a nigger."

maintaining French civilization and whose political actions reflect this enduring horizon. These are the true patriots, as opposed to the more professional politicians. The second type includes the more professionalized politicians, like Florian Philippot, one of Marine's key political aides and himself a graduate of the ÉNA. For them, politics is a short-term game of winning and losing, with more immediate risks and rewards. Pauline clearly admired the "civilizational" leaders. I asked her where Marine lies on this axis. She responded by stating that Marine incorporates both poles, as Marine is a modern woman who understands the game of politics, but more importantly, she is a woman who "wears the party's history on her skin."

Conclusion:

This paper has sought to explain how gendered political symbolism answers class grievances in contemporary France, focusing on FN adherents and their support of Marine Le Pen. I have argued that in order to understand this "transfiguration" from class to gender, one must first understand that petty bourgeois FN adherents see the French political class as a bourgeois liberal class. The critique of politics is therefore a critique of class, and vice versa. Furthermore, this bourgeois class is implicitly seen as a male professional class. Therefore, a symbolically potent woman is seen as the appropriate corrective to France's political-economic woes. The political daughter is known from childhood, a game changer as a woman, incarnating a comforting and impassioned corrective to male bourgeois elites.

The approach employed here points to the value of understanding how the political field in specific country cases is viewed from "the bottom up." Rather than treating variables such as class and gender as independent variables predicting party support, I look at the national political field as itself symbolically gendered and "classed" in the eyes of everyday citizens. I have focused on a case where we can identify the

symbolic feminization of a party as a corrective to the symbolic masculinization of institutionalized bourgeois politics. This approach could be similarly employed for understanding how the symbolic masculinization of a party explains its appeal (or perhaps lack of appeal) within a particular political field. Less developed here is an analysis of how the French political field is racialized – clearly a theme begging for further elaboration.

As Chabal and Daloz emphasize (2006), scholars ought to examine country-specific cultural meanings in order to understand how individuals experience politics. Examination of how the political field is symbolically constructed through class, race, and gender enables comprehension of why specific parties and political figures resonate with citizens at given moments. Research on populism, the rise of the new right in Europe, and disaffection with mainstream parties and liberal democracy would benefit from this approach. Likewise, scholarship drawing from large-scale voter surveys can emerge from this method, with a more accurate understanding of features of the political field that can explain voter outcomes. Finally, comprehending how the political field is classed and gendered is pivotal to grasping contemporary trends in political enchantment and disenchantment.

APPENDIX:

Image 1: "Another Voice": Marine versus the men in suits (2012 presidential poster)

Image 2: Daughter and father in matching scarf and tie, May 1st Rally, 2013

Image 3: Julien Rochedy (holding microphone), former President of the FN Youth

Image 4: Cuvée du Front National, "The People's Blood"

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