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# Les Femmes Illustres, or the Book as Triumphal Arch

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## Résumé

In her preface to *Les Femmes Illustres* (1642), Madeleine de Scudéry offers her book up as a "triumphal arch" erected to glorify illustrious women from history. The title page of the second edition bears a distinct triumphal arch that strengthens the preface's association between literature, architecture, and political space implicit in the notion of book as triumphal arch. This paper explores what it means for Scudéry to present this particular book as a triumphal arch. *Les Femmes Illustres* as triumphal arch functions as a symbolic territorial threshold, initiating each of the female characters into the public space of the book, and as such endowing them with authority. As geographical marker and architecture, the triumphal arch both commemorates and legitimates the glory-the authority, power, legitimacy-of the women crossing into the space of the book.

**Mots-Clés:** Madeleine de Scudéry, Triumphal Arch, Femmes Illustres

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